

THE VISIBLE HANDS

An ethnographic inquiry into
the emergence of food collectives as
a social practice for exchange



Galina Kallio

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The visible hands: An ethnographic inquiry into the emergence of food collectives as a social practice for exchange

Publisher School of Business**Unit** Department of Management**Series** Aalto University publication series DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS 170/2018**Field of research** Organization and Management**Date of the defence** 5 October 2018☐ **Monograph**☐ **Article dissertation**☒ **Essay dissertation****Abstract**

Motivated by an observation that new forms of organizing and alternative practices for exchange increasingly transpire outside formal organizations, this doctoral dissertation adopts a social practice approach to study how food collectives emerged as a new practice for exchange. In doing so it challenges the dominance of markets as the focal explanatory concept of economic organization and shifts attention from organization as an entity to organization as emergent order.

In studying the emergence of a new social practice, the dissertation draws on extensive, in-depth ethnographic fieldwork on Finnish food collectives conducted during 2010-2017. Food collectives comprise of groups of households that collectively procure local and organic food directly from farmers and other suppliers and distribute it among the participating members. The data originate from participant and non-participant observation, interviews, meetings, social media discussions, documents, and archival material.

The empirical findings of the dissertation suggest that the emergence of food collectives as a new practice for exchange was predominantly a tactical rather than discursive accomplishment requiring people to invent their ways of doing while engaging in a bundle of activities and continuously re-connecting different elements, including materiality, temporality, meanings, and embodied skills that were in constant flux (Essay 1). The findings further point towards temporal and moral ordering effects of emerging social practices. The study identifies rhythmic qualities that enable people to sustain their food collective's web of practices (Essay 2) and evaluative work that anchors common values in food collectives' practices (Essay 3).

Capitalizing on four distinct practice theoretical approaches this study advances organizational scholarship, particularly the emerging body of literature examining alternative forms of economic organizing, and contributes to practice theory. The study finds that in order to emerge, new social practices not only involve new ways of knowing and doing, but also require people to unlearn dominant ways of knowing and doing. The study brings further attention to a web of practices and shows how social practices emerge by transforming interactional orders of existing practices and by re-connecting them in new ways. The study also raises important questions on the relationship between people and practices and offers methodological guidance for studying phenomena on emergence.

As the market economy is being increasingly contested at grassroots, the challenge for policy-makers is to understand and better acknowledge the role of alternative forms of economic organizing in the transformation towards a more sustainable economic system.

Keywords Social practice, alternative organization, food collectives, practice emergence, economic exchange, ethnography, organization studies

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List of Publications

This doctoral dissertation consists of an introductory part and of the following four essays, which are referred to in the text by their numbers.

- 1.** Kallio, Galina; Granqvist, Nina. 2015. Emergence of practice for exchange. Published in: *Academy of Management Proceedings*, Vol. 2015, No. 1, p. 17312. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5465/ambpp.2015.17312abstract>
- 2.** Kallio, Galina; Sele, Kathrin. Practice(d) time as rhythmic organizing. Unpublished essay.
- 3.** Kallio, Galina. A carrot isn't a carrot isn't a carrot: Assessing value in food collectives. Unpublished essay.
- 4.** Granqvist, Nina; Kallio, Galina; Nissilä, Heli. 2017. Doing qualitative research on emerging fields and markets. In: Mir, R. & Jain, S. (Eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Qualitative Research in Organization Studies*. New York: Routledge.

1. Introduction

We want to keep this [food collective] under the control of buyers and producers, so that it doesn't like get out of our hands or anything, so that no one would feel like this [collective] is a broker, because it's not. (Coordinator)

1.1 Background: moved by food

From the beginning of our time, people have organized around food. Hunter-gatherers moved to more fertile areas in search of food, learning over time to tame both animals and plants. This enabled them to settle down and organize their growing communities around agriculture and farming. Food established itself as the backbone of international commerce and became a global commodity. Over time, its production, distribution, and consumption underwent a radical transformation and became today's conventional food system (Friedmann, 1982; Trentmann, 2007).

Today, this system is contested on many fronts. Awareness of the unsustainability of industrial agriculture and safety problems related to global distribution chains have made the reliability of the food industry and the expert systems that govern market transactions suspect (Holt Giménez and Shattuck, 2011; Pollan, 2006). One of the most profound changes in the contemporary food system has been the exponential rise of supermarkets and their dominant role in reproducing the system on which they depend, a structural dynamic that is being increasingly challenged (Ilbery and Maye, 2006). Indeed, conflicts over how to grow and trade food have given rise to a variety of food movements addressing concerns about human health, accessibility, justice and sustainability. These include the Fair-Trade movement (Moore, 2004; Raynolds, 2000), the Organic movement (Seyfang, 2007; Lockeretz, 2007), and the Local Food movement (Starr, 2010; Pollan, 2006), among other food movements (Alkon and Mares, 2012; Van Bommel and Spicer, 2011; Levkoe, 2006). They have brought forward agendas supporting fair income for producers, advocated environmentally friendly and chemical-free production, and promoted sustainability and egalitarianism through numerous alternative food initiatives.

These movements have given birth to new standards and pricing mechanisms and to new forms of organizing the production, distribution, and consumption of food (Seyfang, 2006; Crivits and Paredis, 2013; Reinecke et al., 2012). This trend has been increasingly visible in the West, particularly in the USA and in

Europe, where many new forms of organizing access to local food such as community-supported agriculture (CSA), farmers' markets, community gardens, urban agriculture, and food cooperatives have been established alongside the conventional food system (Alkon and Mares, 2012; Allen, 2010). While sharing many similarities, these new forms have distinct underlying purposes for their existence and thus the relationships they create between citizens and farmers or/and farming differ.

For instance, farmers' markets, food cooperatives, and CSA connect local farmers with citydwellers; they cut out all the middlemen and thereby enable direct exchange between producers and consumers. Farmers' markets operating as physical marketplaces represent a more traditional mode of exchange, whereas CSA and food cooperatives function on the basis of membership and assume a different type of engagement from participants – a kind in which the traditionally separate roles of consumer and producer begin to merge. On the other hand, community gardens and urban agriculture have a point of departure that differs from selling and buying food. They aim primarily at empowering citydwellers to garden and farm themselves and hence bring new meaning to how we think about food production and the ownership and politics of land use by appropriating land for cultivation.

Many of these food initiatives have been case studies in the abundant literature cutting across different conceptual perspectives, including for instance social movements (Starr, 2010; Alkon and Mares, 2012; Raynolds, 2000), consumption (Seyfang, 2007; Crivits and Paredis, 2013), markets (Hinrichs, 2000; Weber et al., 2008), and embeddedness and networks (Tregear, 2011; Selfa and Qazi, 2005). Food has also been a topic of organization studies (Briner and Sturdy, 2008) and a recent special issue calls for studying *paradoxes, problems and potentialities in food organizing* (Croidieu et al., 2017), and *work and organization in the global food system* (Böhm et al., 2018) further implies that food indeed plays a major role in the everyday lives of people and impacts how we organize our societies.

When I started my pilot study in 2010, I was driven by several paradoxes related to food. We lived (and still live) at a time when there is an unprecedented abundance of food and yet millions of people are starving daily, the shelves of the supermarkets are filled with thousands of items and yet many people feel that they have only bad choices, the price of food always seems too high for the consumer and yet, it is oftentimes so low that farmers can barely earn a living, packaging informs us about famous brand names and countries of origin yet we barely know anything about the food we eat or about how it was produced. Surrounded by these paradoxes, I became particularly interested in how people addressed these issues collectively.

I came across food collectives at the beginning of 2010. Food collectives were groups of people who collectively procured local and/or organic food directly from farmers and other food suppliers and distributed it among their participating members. These groups attracted my attention because they seemed to differ from other coexisting models that I had previously encountered or read about. Not only had I run into an activity that functioned entirely on a volunteer

and non-for-profit basis, but food collectives engaged several people in buying and selling food on a regular basis without formal organizations or contracts. This made me curious about how these groups managed to create and sustain something that did not appear to be an obvious approach to the exchange of food. Ultimately, a question that continuously popped up on various occasions throughout my journey would not leave me alone: why on earth would you take so much trouble to get food, when you can just go to the supermarket for everything you need?

1.2 Discovering food collectives

It is not uncommon to start an ethnographic study with a specific question in mind and then end up asking not only a significantly different question but many other questions as well (Kondo, 1990). My study began from a set of contradictory observations arising from the field that led me to reconsider some of the most powerful narratives offered by the existing literature on the conceptualization of food collectives. Much of the existing research approached a similar type of activity around local and organic food through social movements, consumption, or the market concepts (Seyfang, 2007; Hinrichs, 2000; Crivits and Paredis, 2013; Allen, 2010). I found it hard, however, to place my observations on food collectives within these frameworks.

Because food collectives were an emergent phenomenon at the time I was conducting my fieldwork, I found that even some of the core people involved to define their organization.

PR: Some are these small groups, and then there are these big groups that also call themselves food collectives. Should there be a standard or some definition for what counts as a food collective? [laughs]

G: Right, I had actually prepared a question about what you consider a food collective.

PR: Is it maybe when it is organized and earns margins and someone works for it that you can no longer call it a food collective [...] maybe you could define it through pricing and ordering; a traditional or pure food collective does not take any margin or make any profit and orders are placed directly with farmers and no rent is paid for the place where the food is distributed. (Founder)

This person had founded a food collective that had grown rapidly and she needed to find new ways to organize it. She was thinking out loud that maybe a more organized food collective could probably no longer be considered a 'pure' collective. In another food collective, a coordinator reflected on whether particular types of suppliers can define a food collective. The interview started with her bringing up this topic at the first handshake.

G: Nice that you could meet with me. So, do you coordinate this food collective in [name of the neighborhood]?

LP: Yes, we actually have two collectives here [in the neighborhood], but the other one orders food mainly through webstores.

G: Okay, I see.

LP: Yeah, like what is the definition of a food collective really?

G: Oh, you went straight to the point [laughs]. Yes, so what do you think, what is a food collective?

LP: Well, I guess I don't have any good definition, except that a group of people order food together, or they collectively procure food that then comes to a common place. But some say that if you order from webstores then it's not a food collective, but I don't know, I haven't thought that way. (Coordinator)

While some were hesitant about what kind of organizing still counts as a food collective, one of the first founders of a food collective in Finland had a clear picture of how to define this type of activity.

The main principle in a food collective is that we are regular buyers with a permanent relationship with the producers. And that we order food in advance. And that the food is not stored anywhere in between but goes directly from the farm to the member household. And if you operate otherwise, it is no longer a food collective. (Founder)

To my surprise, even though defining food collective activity precisely was difficult, people did not seem to question the purpose of their food collective. They were more concerned about how to accomplish that purpose. And indeed, while all collectives were founded for buying and selling local and organic food, I discovered several variations in the ways each collective organized this in practice.

As my fieldwork deepened and as I became an active participant in food collectives myself, I encountered numerous concerns alongside those related to practical organization and also learned about numerous aspirations that people shared with me. Both farmers and households were worried about the unsustainability of food production and opacity in food processing and distribution and sought more sustainable and just alternatives. Farmers shared their concerns about the condition of the soil and household-members about the quality of the produce; farmers aspired to earn their living through farming, households wanted to acknowledge the hard work of farmers in producing the food; and people were generally unhappy with the concentration of food retailing in two supermarket chains.

Many of my conversations with participants in food collectives centered around people wishing to impact their own food choices. As stated by an early founder of one of the food collectives, being able to eat pure and sustainably produced food and by so doing empower oneself to support a good cause more broadly was important.

MH: People want pure food. In conventional agriculture you can use some 350 additives whereas in organic [only] 50. I think this is a big difference. And then when you want to buy local organic produce for yourself then why not do it for others as well. [...] So for me, no GMO, fewer additives, less packaging material, and more saving the world. You need to start from yourself. Because industrial agriculture will exhaust the land and then we can't feed the many people on this planet. Such small-scale grassroots activity is always good.

G: Why so?

MH: Because one should always fight back. (Founder)

I further discovered that many of the food collective founders were women who wanted to feed their children wholesome food. I also realized that people sought more sociability and the opportunity to get to know their own neighborhood better and for some this in fact became a very strong reason for founding new food collectives.

I am not from here, but I am a very social person, and I wanted to have this village-like atmosphere. To get to know the people who live nearby and then you would have help available at a low threshold when you need it. It saddens me to see people not greeting their neighbors and this coldness... (Founder)

To my surprise, I could not identify common frames (Benford and Snow, 2000; Weber et al., 2008) among the different food collectives. For quite some time, I continued to encounter new reasons for participation in food collectives; I kept discovering new things. One person mentioned hating the feeling of going to the supermarket, another wanted to support her culinary hobby by buying good quality ingredients, and a third wanted to consume unwashed, organic root vegetables. Farmers seemed to have equally diverse reasons for participation in food collectives. For some, food collectives simply provided an opportunity to diversify sales, while others saw food collectives as part of support for a larger cause. In fact, few farmers even questioned the need for food collectives and learned at the same time to participate themselves.

As I learned more about the reasoning behind participation in food collectives and about how these organizations functioned, I realized that sustaining a food collective was not easy and required a lot of work from its members. This made me question my initial assumption about whether food collectives could be considered the manifestation of a political or market-oriented food movement (see e.g. Weber et al., 2008; Wilkinson, 2007; Hinrichs, 2000; Noll and Werkheiser, 2018; Werkheiser and Noll, 2014). I asked myself the following questions: what are these people moved by – if not by a shared agenda to influence food politics or create new types of food markets – and how do they manage to persist in their efforts? How are these groups able to create and sustain an activity that appears to be a tedious way of buying and selling food despite their lack of an explicit and commonly shared agenda, a formal organizational structure, monetary resources, and above all, wider institutional support?

This dissertation is motivated by the observation that new practices and ways of organizing around food – but also other spheres like energy, or transportation – increasingly transpire outside formal organizations and challenge the prevailing practices of the market economy (Parker et al., 2014b; Davis et al., 2008; King and Pearce, 2010). But to explain this phenomenon, the existing research primarily mobilizes predetermined frameworks derived from social movements (Van Bommel and Spicer, 2011; Starr, 2010; Nestle and McIntosh, 2010), and/or market concepts (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2013; Soule, 2012; Kurland and McCaffrey, 2016; Seyfang, 2007), or formal organizations (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011), and tends to study organizational and practice emergence retrospectively, emphasizing discursive frameworks instead of tracing action as it unfolds

(Weber et al., 2008; Van Bommel and Spicer, 2011; Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007; Gherardi and Perrotta, 2011). Against this background, my dissertation responds to calls for examination of how current practices of capitalist market-based economies are being increasingly challenged with new practices and alternative forms of organizing emerging at the grassroots level (Parker et al., 2014b). In what follows, I introduce the theoretical framework and main concepts of this dissertation (chapter 1.3) after which I present the research questions for the study (chapter 1.4) and outline the structure (chapter 1.5).

1.3 The theoretical frameworks and main concepts of the research

The focal idea of a theoretical framework is to define the main concepts of the research and determine “what it is a case of” (Granqvist et al., 2017) and thereby enable an inquiry into the existing literature and a dialogue with it. It is not always clear, however, what is meant by a theoretical framework. Abend (2008) distinguishes seven different characterizations of ‘a theory.’ He argues that theory means different things and has different purposes depending on the research task it is meant to perform. Because of its emergent nature, the task of this study has primarily been to understand, conceptualize, and describe food collectives and their functioning and by so doing provide an alternative representation of the emergence of food collectives as a new practice for exchange.

As I have suggested above, while food collectives could be framed in many different ways, I was unable to understand and describe what I was seeing in the everyday lives of food collectives with the theories that seemed most obvious at the time. Essentially, and conceptually speaking, the driving force of this study has been to better understand emergent economic action that challenges the existing economic order. In prior research, organizational scholars have acknowledged several different forms of economic organization, including markets, networks, and hierarchies (hierarchies being often equated with formal organizations) (Thompson, 1991), and institutions and social movements (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011). Each of these domains represent a distinct mode of organizing and thereby has its own principles for ordering economic action (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011; Ahrne et al., 2015; Powell, 2003).

In this study, I propose a practice theoretical approach (Schatzki, 2001a; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011) and a focus on social practice in studying economic organizing. The practice theoretical approach directs attention to everyday action and its ordering effects (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Nicolini, 2013) and in so doing shifts the focus from organization as an entity to organization as enacted order (Schatzki, 2001b). As I was able to observe the unfolding of food collectives as a social practice for exchange, this study is well suited to address both practice emergence and economic organizing. In Figure 1, I present the research agenda for this study. The agenda presents the research approach and conceptual foundation of the study, the empirical work, and the contributions of this study to the relevant literatures.

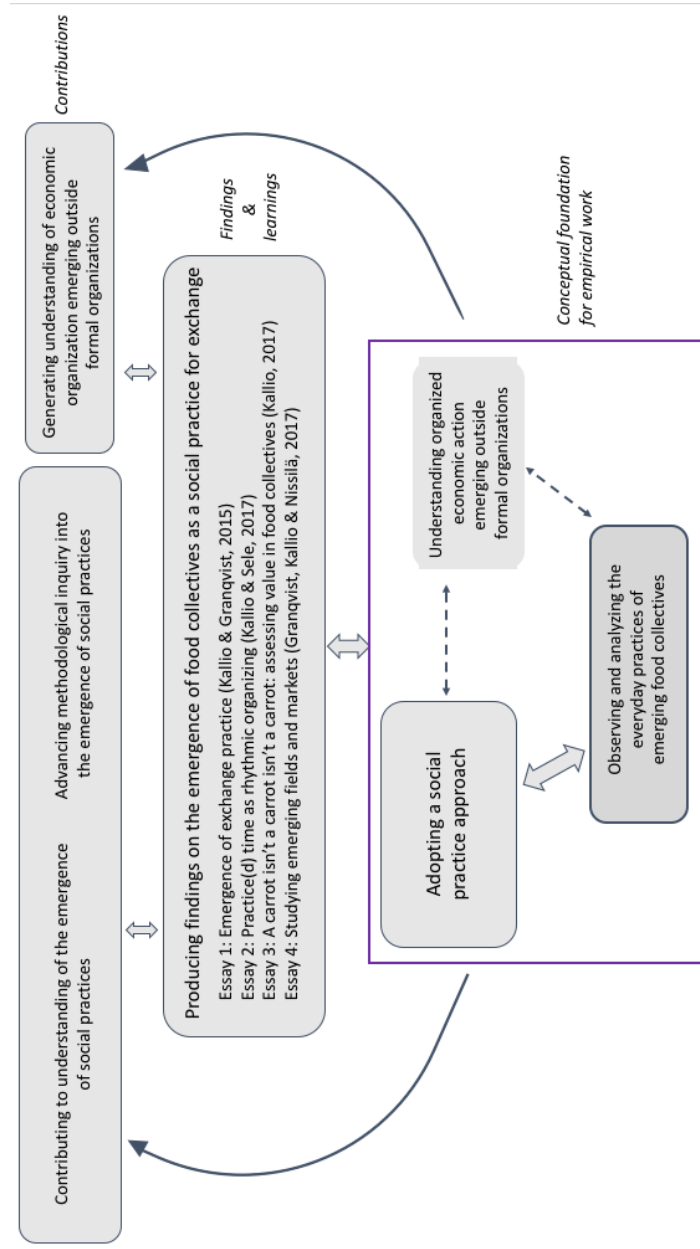


Figure 1. Research agenda

1.3.1 Social practice as the focus of study

Instead of treating organizations as actors, or as an empirical core as suggested by classical organization theory (Hirsch and Lounsbury, 1997; Fligstein, 2001), the practice theoretical approach does not regard organizations as stable entities. Accordingly, “organization” emerges through the enactment of practices. Indeed, many practice scholars have contributed to the study of organizations by suggesting a focus on “organization as it happens” (Schatzki, 2006a;

Miettinen et al., 2009) and by putting the interconnected web of practices that constitute “organization” in the center of the empirical analysis (Gherardi, 2012; Nicolini, 2012; Orr, 1995; Wakefield, 2007). However, because ‘practice’ is an elusive concept that scholars approach from very different perspectives, a short introduction to the way this concept is used is in order.

In her classification, Orlikowski (2010, see also Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011) distinguishes three ways in which organizational scholars engage with the concept of practice in their research. Most commonly, scholars treat *practice as a phenomenon* and refer to the concept of practice simply as an empirical object where ‘practice’ and ‘theory’ are set apart. An example could be to use an institutional theory to study money management practice (Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007). Following another approach, *practice as a perspective*, researchers apply a practice theoretical framework as an analytical perspective to study ‘social reality.’ This could mean applying Schatzki’s framework to study strategy making (Hydly, 2015) or Bourdieu’s concept of habitus to study social movements (Crossley, 2003). Finally, scholars may engage with *practice as philosophy* and conceive of practices as constituents of reality. Here, practices are treated as onto-epistemologic objects (e.g. Gherardi, 2011; Brown and Duguid, 2001) that can be studied, represented, and theorized.

In this study, I follow the last-mentioned approach and treat everyday action as the basis for ontological and epistemological considerations and thus give primacy to practices as the focal unit of analysis and as the primary source of knowing and theorizing (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011). I am, however, aware that the methods with which research is conducted influence the way we see the empirical phenomenon (Wakefield, 2007), while at the same time our engagement with different conceptual frameworks – even within practice theory – influences the ways social practices are represented (Nicolini, 2009b; 2012).

This being said, I acknowledge that my practice theoretical conceptualization of food collectives deepened as my fieldwork intensified. I began with practice as a phenomenon (seeing food collective practices as part of a social movement), then applied practice theoretical frameworks to study food collectives (applying the “new practice theories” (Miettinen et al., 2012) to studying how food collectives create new markets), and finally moved on to the current approach, in which I conceptualize food collectives as a social practice. The concept of *social practice* is thereby central to this study. However, alongside an examination of the emergence of social practices, understanding “organization” has also been central in this study. Hence *organization* and *social order* are additional focal concepts of this study.

1.3.2 Social practice, organization and social order

In this dissertation, I treat food collectives as *a social practice* and conceptualize them as a particular kind of social practice – a practice for exchange. I use social practice to refer to an organized form of activity characterized by its own practical and normative rationality that is sensible to those engaging in a particular practice (Gherardi, 2009c; Schatzki, 2001b), but not necessarily to those who are new to the social practice or who are momentarily observing it. By definition,

a social practice is always mediated materially, unfolds in and through time, and comprises several interlinked practices that form a web (Gherardi, 2012). To be sustained, a social practice requires continuous re-production and this reproduction has ordering effects on people and on the (non-)human material world more broadly (Schatzki, 2001a; Gherardi, 2009c).

Several practice scholars argue that everyday actions are consequential in the production and reproduction of social order, which is one of the central issues in practice theory (Thévenot, 2001; Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984; Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011). Social order refers to something that is “instituted within practices” (Schatzki, 2001b: 45) and based on the existing literature, it can manifest itself in different ways. For example, social order can refer to structures (Giddens, 1984), power positions in different fields (Bourdieu, 1986), arrangements in bundles of practices (Schatzki, 2001b), or interactional accountability (Nicolini, 2011). While social order is the term generally used in discussing the ordering effects of practices, one can, at least analytically, distinguish different types of orders including, but not limited to, political/power-based order (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu, 1979), temporal order (Zerubavel, 1985; Lefebvre, 2004), moral order (MacIntyre, 1984; Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006), and economic/capitalist order (Parker et al., 2014b; Marx, 1999).

As any given social practice is by definition organized (Schatzki, 2001b), in this dissertation, I treat the concepts of (social) order and organization interchangeably and refer to both the organizing and ordering effects of practices. Understanding these effects is crucial when examining the emergence of new social practices such as food collectives, because, as order and practice go hand in hand, studying emerging social practice is intrinsically about studying emergent order/organization. In this dissertation, I particularly explore economic action and emergent economic order and for this purpose mobilize the concept of exchange.

1.3.3 Approaching economic organization through the concepts of social practice and exchange

Economic organization is a broad concept used in this study to refer to various forms of organizing economic activity such as social movements, markets, or formal organizations (Powell, 2003; Ahrne et al., 2015). As suggested previously, adopting a social practice approach brings social practice to the center in analyzing economic activity and organization. By making this move, I treat social practice as a form of organizing (Wenger and Snyder, 2000). At its core, economic activity refers to a set of interconnected practices comprising core practices such as production, consumption, distribution, and exchange (Granovetter, 1985). As acknowledged in several disciplines, exchange in particular is central to any kind of economic activity (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007; Graeber, 2011).

In this study, economic exchange is treated as a social practice referring to an organized form of activity by which production and consumption are connected in ways that enable buying and selling, or equally giving and receiving, the objects of exchange. At the core of exchange is the formation of relationships

between and among the parties to the exchange and to the objects of exchange; this has effects on how people and societies are ordered more broadly (Marx, 1999; Graeber, 2001; Mauss, 1954).

In my inquiry into the social practice of food collectives, I draw from anthropological and sociological accounts on exchange that provide conceptual insights into the nature of this practice. By focusing on food collectives as a social practice for exchange, this dissertation steers attention from market-based concepts, specifically food consumption practices (Seyfang, 2007; Seyfang, 2006; Fonte, 2013; Spaargaren et al., 2013; Warde, 1997) and food markets (Hinrichs, 2000; Weber et al., 2008; Kurland and McCaffrey, 2016) on the one hand, and from food movements (Starr, 2010; Van Bommel and Spicer, 2011) on the other hand, to social practice in the study of economic organizing. Here, the entire social practice comes under scrutiny as the focus is not only on the aggregate of transactions but on materially and socially mediated relationships formed in various interlinked practices and on the organization of these practices to enable buying and selling (or giving and receiving) on a regular basis (Miller, 2002; Humphrey and Hugh-Jones, 1992). Hence, in studying emergent economic organizing, the analytical focus of this dissertation is on the social practice of food collectives and all the practices that comprise it.

Food collectives provide an interesting and unique setting for studying the emergence of social practices on the one hand and emergent economic organizing on the other. As an exchange practice, food collectives differ greatly from the supermarket exchange currently dominating how the buying and selling of food are organized in a contemporary welfare society. In comparison with supermarket exchange, in which production and consumption become disconnected through the value-chain, food collectives reconnect these two ends and recreate social and material relationships as they put producers and households in direct contact with each other. This makes the dynamics of emergent economic organization visible.

1.4 Aims and research questions

Set against the background provided above, the overall aim of this doctoral dissertation is to increase our understanding of how new social practices, potentially challenging the prevailing practices of the market economy, emerge and become organized. Hence my aim is to examine, both empirically and conceptually, how a new type of social practice for exchange emerged in the form of food collectives and thereby contribute to academic discussions on practice emergence (Schatzki, 2013; Miettinen et al., 2012) and to participate in academic and also broader societal discussions on how the existing practices of the market-based economy are being challenged by new forms of economic organizing (Weber et al., 2008; King and Pearce, 2010), a phenomenon that Parker et al. (2014) refer to as alternative organization.

Because the phenomenon was only unfolding at the time I conducted my fieldwork, my aims are primarily constative in nature (Kalleberg, 1995 in Räsänen, 2015). Hence my research has evolved from constructing the object of research

by conceptualizing food collectives as a social practice to describing this practice and its emergence. Consequently, this dissertation essentially studies how people create and shape their practices and how practices shape their creators.

Conceptually, my interest has been to better understand how new social practices emerge. Empirically, I have sought to understand how and why food collectives emerged as an alternative practice for exchange and what has sustained this type of social practice. Consequently, I have formulated the overarching conceptual research question addressing the empirical work in the different essays as follows:

How do social practices emerge and become organized in and through time?

To answer this question, I have conducted three empirical studies. In all three essays I draw on data representing the same empirical context, namely food collectives, which I analyze by switching conceptual lenses and combining different parts of the data. The first study examines how practices for exchange emerge and asks the following question:

- *How did food collective activity become an exchange practice? (essay 1)*

The second study looks into how social practices are sustained by pointing to the temporal aspects in their organization. By making the interlinked web of food collective practices the focus of analysis, the essay explores how people in food collectives deal with the temporal requirements required to organize and maintain their collectives and asks the following question:

- *How do people accomplish rhythmic organizing within their food collective's web of practices? (essay 2)*

The third study focuses on the question of value in understanding emergent social practices by exploring the relationship between the means and ends of organizing. In particular, in addressing how people organize around what they value, this study asks the following question:

- *How do people in food collectives assess the goods around which their social practice is organized (essay 3)?*

Despite their central role in social life, there has been little exploration of the emergence of social practices either conceptually or empirically (Miettinen et al., 2012; Gomez and Bouty, 2011). There is still much to learn about how new social practices emerge and become organized. Studying emergence is not merely a conceptual or empirical question, but also a methodological one (Granqvist et al., 2017). Hence, I have included a methodological research paper as part of my dissertation; it contributes to the overall understanding of how 'emergence' can be studied and asks the following question:

- *How can the emergence of new fields and markets be studied? (essay 4)*

Combining the findings of my papers with the theoretical aims, this dissertation shows how the emergence of food collectives as a social practice for exchange was primarily a tactical accomplishment of people who started to create ways to do things together by organizing their practices and ended up being organized by their practices. By mobilizing practice theory and by drawing on anthropological and sociological research this dissertation contributes to a better understanding of how social practices emerge and offers new insight into the study of economic organization transpiring outside formal organizations. Specifically, this study emphasizes accounting for the temporal and moral aspects of emerging social practices, the dynamics between unfolding social practice and participating people, and calls for empirically grounded conceptualization of social practices.

1.5 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation comprises two parts: the Kappa (Part 1) and the four essays (Part 2). The introductory part consists of seven chapters. In this chapter, I have outlined the background for the study and the empirical phenomenon and established the scope and aims of conceptual research.

In chapter 2, I position this study in relation to three prominent approaches to the study of economic organization outside formal organizations and introduce practice theory as an alternative. I specifically review four distinct practice theoretical approaches and elaborate how organization can be understood through these different conceptualizations of social practice.

In light of the distinct conceptualizations of social practice, Chapter 3 discusses how the emergence of social practices can be understood. For exploring emergent economic organization in particular, I draw on insight from research in anthropology and economic sociology and on practice theory and conceptualize exchange as a social practice.

In Chapter 4, I will introduce the empirical context and describe food collectives and their functioning.

Chapter 5 presents methodological choices and the research process and elaborates on the fieldwork and the analytical process conducted for this study.

Chapter 6 comprises summaries of the four essays and hence presents the findings and key concepts used in the separate studies.

Finally, Chapter 7 discusses the theoretical contributions and practical implications of the study, draws conclusions and outlines limitations, and suggests avenues for further research.

2. Practice theory – An alternative approach to economic organization

There is a tendency in writings about organizations to reify the organization, to grant it status as an actor comparable to persons, and yet it is clear that organizations do not exist in that way. (Orr, 1995: 48)

In this part of the dissertation I describe the background against which I position my own research and introduce the conceptual framework of the study. The purpose of this theoretical chapter is two-fold. First, it reviews three prominent frameworks for research on “non-formal” economic organization that have recently surfaced in the field of organization studies and that have influenced my thinking. These are social movement theory (sub-chapter 2.1.1) and the frameworks of partial organization (sub-chapter 2.1.2) and alternative organization (sub-chapter 2.1.3). Second, it introduces practice theory as an alternative approach to the study of economic organization (chapter 2.2). Building on the practice theoretical approaches introduced in this chapter, the next chapter (Chapter 3) brings exchange to the center of economic organization and discusses the emergence of social practices.

2.1 Beyond formal organizations

Acknowledging that classical organizational analysis originates from the need to understand the functioning of a large, complex organization (Fligstein, 2001; Hirsch and Lounsbury, 1997; Bittner, 1965) several scholars have called for alternative frameworks for studying new forms of organizing economic activity (Podolny and Page, 1998; Walsh et al., 2006; Parker et al., 2014a; King and Pearce, 2010). Social movement theory in particular has proved a prominent framework amongst organizational scholars for examining on the one hand the nexus of movements and organizations and on the other hand exploring movements as market actors (Davis et al., 2008; Soule, 2012; Carroll and Swaminathan, 2000; Weber et al., 2008; De Bakker et al., 2013).

Alongside social movement frameworks, more recent conceptualizations, partial organization (Ahrne et al., 2015; Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011) and alternative organization (Parker et al., 2014b) have been offered as explanations of the forms and principles of economic organizing. In the following, I briefly review

these frameworks and their assumptions about what organizes economic action. These frameworks and their main premises are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Main premises of alternative frameworks for studying economic organization

Concept	Main premises	Underlying assumptions on what organizes
Social movements as market actors (Soule, 2012; King and Pearce, 2010)	Social movements challenge existing economic organization (e.g. markets, formal organizations) by creating new markets / challenging existing markets. Social movements operate through various formal and informal organizations (SMOs). SMOs mobilize various resources for achieving common goals.	Articulation of meanings and mobilization of cultural frameworks and resources
Partial organization (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011)	Organization is a particular kind of social order different from other types of orders like networks, markets, or institutions Partial organization refers to a combination of the elements of formal organizations: membership, rules, hierarchy, monitoring, sanctioning. Organization / partial organization can be observed in various types of orders.	Decisions
Alternative organization (Parker et al., 2014b)	Capitalist organization has many problems and should be questioned. Alternative organization refers to economic organizing based on individual freedom, solidarity, and responsibility.	Everyday / reflexive politics
Practice theoretical approach (Gherardi, 2012; Schatzki, 2001a; 2006a; Nicolini, 2012)	Organizations comprise a web of practices. Organization is not an entity/actor, but an enacted order. Social practices are organized and (thus) have ordering effects. Organization/social order is produced in and manifest through social practices.	Practices

2.1.1 Social movements as market actors

Social movements, broadly understood as networks of collective action (Diani, 1992), present themselves as ideological actors involved in political debates, promote new cultural meanings, and challenge incumbent actors and prevailing discourses (Benford and Snow, 2000; Pichardo, 1997). While social movement research has traditionally focused on how movements trigger societal transformation by contesting the dominant political, economic, and cultural orders primarily through various direct action tactics and by promoting alternative agendas and cultural frames (Diani, 2000; Campbell, 2005; Snow et al., 1986), organizational scholarship has recently acknowledged how the nature of movements is changing; while they have primarily been political actors they are now increasingly becoming market actors.

In this domain, several scholars have shown how social movements challenge the existing economic organization by altering old or establishing new institutions, fields and markets and by introducing new organizational forms (Lounsbury et al., 2003; Lawrence and Phillips, 2004; Rao, 1998). In fact, much of this research has centered on food movements. For instance, Weber et al. (2008) investigate how a social movement around grass-fed meat created a market for this new product. They argue that market creation was enabled by active mobilization of cultural codes that infused meanings into the process. Van Bommel and Spicer (2011) in turn study the Slow Food Movement and drawing

on discourse analysis, find that discursive agency was influential in the positioning of Slow Food and in establishing it as a new field. Reinecke et al. (2012) in turn, study how a market for sustainability standards for coffee emerged as a result of movement activity. They suggest that standards markets were on the one hand enabled by positioning all the standards brought forward by various actors in relation to each other, and on the other hand by aligning them through shared vocabulary and by harmonizing certification, hence facilitating their co-existence.

But while the concept of a social movement has enabled organizational scholars to see how movement actors mobilize people and resources, reach out to and form relationships with the relevant stakeholders, and interact with other movement organizations, much of this literature seems to share an implicit assumption that movements operate strategically and intentionally to discursively promote and establish new markets or challenge existing ones.

This may also be a methodological issue since the majority of empirical studies on the emergence of new forms of economic organizing are retrospective in nature (see e.g. Weber et al., 2008; Sikavica and Pozner, 2013; Parker et al., 2014b). Looking back into the emergence of markets and into the formation of movements is thus more likely to reflect their activities on a macro level and thereby show that they operate strategically and by employing powerful discourses. Hence, while the social movement perspective sheds light on the discursive role of movements in contesting economic orders by mobilizing new cultural meanings and frameworks, through identity work, and through legitimization of political agendas and market activities, it seems to posit a hierarchy according to which there is a central cultural understanding (discursive frameworks) that gives rise to practical action, thereby undermining the role that everyday practices play in economic organizing.

2.1.2 Partial organization

In an attempt to shift from understandings of organization as an entity to organization as an organizing mechanism, a quite recent approach coined ‘partial organization’ has been proposed by Ahrne and Brunsson (2011). The authors use partial organization in referring to the elements constitutive of formal organizations, namely membership, hierarchy, rules, monitoring and sanctioning, and suggest that these elements – in their various combinations – also appear to function as organizing mechanisms in other “forms of orders” (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011: : 84) such as networks, institutions, or markets (Ahrne et al., 2015; Ahrne et al., 2016).

The authors suggest that “organization” can be found in many different forms of organizing and should be seen as a type of order characterized by decisions. In this sense, the authors argue that organization is a form of social order differing, for instance, from other forms of organizing economic activity such as networks, markets, and institutions. While networks imply informal relationships and markets assume certain ‘mechanisms’ and explicit rules, tacit norms underlie institutions. The major distinction made by the authors between networks and institutions and organization is that they treat networks and

institutions as emergent orders, while “organization” is treated as a decided order. Hence the concept of partial organization aims to capture organization – emergent or established – in any given context by providing a framework for studying its characteristics. For instance, the idea of partial organization has been further applied to spheres like social movements (Den Hond et al., 2015; Haug, 2013), standardization (Brunsson et al., 2012), family (Ahrne et al., 2016), and markets (Ahrne et al., 2015).

Although partial organization provides a framework for capturing emergent order and enables the study of economic organization, it does this by providing fixed and pre-defined categories. The framework ends up depicting not only novel forms of economic organizing but also emergent orders by examining how they compare with the characteristics of formal organizations or reflect them. By putting decision-making at the center in explaining organization, one further fails to account for ‘organization as it happens’ – that is, account for practical creativity that Gherardi (2016: 681) refers to as “doing while inventing the way of doing” embedded in knowing in practice and forming an essential part of active processes of ordering – as it arises from within (a) practice. Additionally, the framework of partial organization does not acknowledge political or moral dimensions of economic organization – even though economic ordering of society suggests much more than value-neutral organizing (see e.g. Parker et al., 2014a; Moore and Grandy, 2017; Nielsen, 2006; Hitlin and Vaisey, 2013).

2.1.3 Alternative organization

Indeed, there seems to be increasing concern among scholars in different fields that challenging the basic premises of the ‘classical’ business organization is essentially about unfolding the larger economic system, namely that of capitalism, upon which organizational analysis has been founded (Bauman, 2011; Graeber, 2011; Parker et al., 2014b; Raworth, 2017). While several other exchange systems have always existed and continuously transpire alongside market-based solutions (Moilanen et al., 2014), “alternative organization” has only recently surfaced as an area of inquiry (Parker et al., 2014b; Parker et al., 2014a; Parker et al., 2007). The notion of alternative organization is an opening for (re)considering the basic principles of organizing business as usual. By bringing forth this notion, the authors want to draw attention to the relationship between means and ends in organizing and emphasize that economic organizing is never free from politics.

While acknowledging the existence of several alternatives to the present capitalist mode of organization, like slavery or feudalism, scholars of alternative organization do not advocate such “alternatives”. By contrast, they propose three basic principles for alternative organization: autonomy, solidarity, and responsibility. Autonomy refers to individual freedom regarding the fundamental questions of how people live and organize their lives; one should have freedom to choose, but similarly freedom, for instance, from economic, ideological, or physical oppression. These two are mutually dependent, and hence the second principle starts from the collective and argues that autonomy and individual freedom can only be pursued and enabled collectively. As introduced by the

authors, the principle of solidarity assumes that social construction of humanity should rest upon the principles of understanding, cooperation, community, and equality. And finally, organizing should rest upon the principle of responsibility for the future and thereby question the basic tendency of capitalism to externalize its adverse effects. Responsibility calls for reflecting on the consequences and the long-term effects of economic organizing.

By introducing these principles, the notion of alternative organization opens up new ways to rethink the nature of economic organizing and has potential for challenging the hegemonic ideology and ideal of capitalist organization. Furthermore, by coining the concept of alternative organization, the authors suggest that organizing is and should be reflexive towards people having agency over the ways they organize and responsibility for the decisions they make. However, alternative organization is not a theory, but rather an explicitly normative conceptual proposition for rethinking the nature of economic organization in contemporary and future societies. The main premise set out by this conceptual proposition is that organizing is never free from politics; one may think of “organizing as a kind of politics made durable” (Parker et al. 2014b: 39). It is important to point out the political nature of (any) organization and reveal the underlying power relations because, as the authors suggest, they are not commonly included in the organizational analysis of economic organization. At the same time, by introducing the premises for alternative organization, this conceptualization, like that of partial organization, establishes predetermined categories for studying the characteristics of economic organization.

Due to the ethnographic nature of my study and the observations and experiences arising from the field, I could not directly relate to the frameworks presented above. Social movement frameworks emphasizing the role of discourses in framing meaning and market-oriented agency did not reflect the practical struggles that people had in creating, organizing, and sustaining food collectives. Further, being an emergent form of order, pre-determined categories offered by partial organization did not help explain the kind of organization brought about by food collectives.

And while the principles of alternative organization resonated with many of my observations in the field – food collective organizations indeed seemed to question the capitalist market-based order with having the principles of autonomy, solidarity and responsibility in the core their exchange practice – it was not only these principles that seemed to organize food collectives. There were other, foremost practical and material aspects that were at play in the organization of food collective exchanges. Thereby, my inability to use the existing conceptualizations made me turn to practice theory for a better understanding of food collectives from within the possibilities and constraints of their own practice. Next, I introduce a practice theoretical approach with four conceptualizations of a social practice, each of which provides distinct premises for understanding organization/order.

2.2 Introducing a practice theoretical approach

In this chapter, I introduce a practice theoretical approach by distinguishing four conceptualizations of a social practice: knowing-in-practice (sub-chapter 2.3.2), an element-based understanding (sub-chapter 2.3.3), practical activity (sub-chapter 2.3.4), and Alasdair MacIntyre's conceptualization of social practice (2.2.5). This categorization is based on an understanding of the concept of social practice that I have developed through my own empirical work. In reviewing these approaches, I focus on their main presuppositions regarding the concept of social practice and the underlying assumptions that each of the approaches brings forth for understanding the organizing/ordering effects of practices. Before introducing the approaches, I will briefly discuss the ways in which the turn to practice can be understood from an organizational perspective.

2.2.1 Tu(r)ning to practice

Since the turn of the millennium, practice theory has re-emerged as a salient conceptual lens for understanding social phenomena (Miettinen et al., 2009; Schatzki et al., 2001). While the turn to practice in the field of organizational and management studies is rather recent, practice theories have long roots that can be traced to traditions of philosophy with the writings by, for instance, Wittgenstein and Heidegger, sociology, with powerful scholars like Giddens, Marx and Bourdieu, and anthropology (see e.g. Ortner, 1984; Schatzki et al., 2001). Although practice theories share the basic assumption that the social is situated in practices rather than in cognition or structures, there is however no uniform theory or definition of social practice. Instead, scholars with differing research tasks and interests tend to operationalize the concept and theories of practice in very different ways (e.g. Kemmis, 2009b; Gherardi, 2000; Corradi et al., 2010; Reckwitz, 2002).

In studying practices, researchers have drawn on a variety of practice traditions in studying areas like consumption (Shove et al., 2009; Warde, 2005), markets (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007; Knorr Cetina, 2007), organizations, organizing and coordinating (Orlikowski and Yates, 2002; Jarzabkowski et al., 2012; Nicolini, 2012), strategy (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Vaara and Whittington, 2012), organizational routines (Feldman, 2003; Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Pentland and Feldman, 2005), sustainability (Røpke, 2009), entrepreneurship (Johannisson, 2011), and work (Räsänen, 2008; Orr, 1998). In organization studies, the practice approach has shifted attention from organization as an entity to understanding organization as something that is enacted and comprises various interlinked practices (Gherardi, 2009b; Nicolini, 2012; Schatzki, 2006a).

In this sense, the turn towards practice has, on the one hand, meant *turning* away from the study of organizations and shifting to the study of *organizational practices*. Here, the focus on practice has enabled organizational scholars to better examine *what people* in different organizations *actually do* when they coordinate, strategize, or work, and how they learn and know *how to do* that what they are supposed to do (Gherardi, 2006; Nicolini, 2011; Orr, 1995). On

the other hand, the turn to practice has suggested a focus on *organization of practices* (see e.g. Schatzki, 2001b; 2005); here scholars have shifted their attention to the various components that constitute and organize practices. This kind of examination has primarily resulted in re-presenting a practice from the outside rather than from the inside.

A third way, a way that I would describe as *tuning in* to practice, attempts to be reflective with regard to how practices are collectively accomplished and to capture the essential aspects that characterize a particular practice from the perspective of practitioners, that is, from the inside rather than the outside (Gherardi, 2012; Räsänen, 2009). Several scholars have called for consideration of the practical implications of practice theory (Feldman and Worline, 2016; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011; Eikeland and Nicolini, 2011). They suggest that scholars reflect on the relationship between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’. Indeed, at its best, a practice theoretical approach can enable researchers to focus on studying everyday action and to become aware of the various aspects and ordering effects of social practices from within without imposing predefined frameworks about the organizational nature of practices (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011).

With the conceptualizations outlined below, I try to bring out the ordering effects and aspects of the practices emphasized in the various approaches. The review I provide is by no means an attempt to be exhaustive. Instead, it serves the purpose of introducing the four distinct practice-theoretical approaches that I consider important for this study and which I have mobilized in the different essays in varying ways and shows how all of the approaches “tune” the researcher differently to practices and to understanding their organizational effects.

2.2.2 Knowing in practice

The knowing-in-practice approach emphasizes the relevance of the context and situatedness of practices and their embodied characteristics and contributes specifically to the study of learning and knowing in organizations (Gherardi, 2000; 2001; Orr, 1995; Brown and Duguid, 2000; Orlikowski, 2002). It draws on empirical work conducted in various organizational settings and has developed an understanding of practices as epistemic units and objects of study that point to how people learn and know not only because they are part of an organization or a community of people, but because they share and participate in the same practice with other practitioners. This approach has been developed by a group of scholars within organization studies (Gherardi, 2000; Brown and Duguid, 2000; Orlikowski, 2002; but see also Engeström, 2001; Engeström and Sannino, 2010) who have radically questioned the dominant views on knowledge and shown how learning and knowing are intrinsically connected with doing rather than with possessing.

Several scholars advancing this approach have researched work practices in different organizational contexts (Orr, 2006; Gherardi and Nicolini, 2002b; Gherardi, 2012; Whittington et al., 2006). The legendary ethnographic study by Julian Orr (1986) on the work of technicians repairing photocopiers reveals how technicians learn and become competent by describing their everyday work and

how this work, which requires a high degree of skill, is conducted while they balance relationships between customers, technicians, and machines. Orr shows how technicians, who form a community of practitioners, learn not only through physical work with the machines but by combining their work with articulation of what they do. Hence, they narrate their experience of working with the machines, assessing and diagnosing them, and ultimately share stories about the problems they encounter.

Orr's work, however, is much more than a description of how practitioners learn to be competent within a working practice. It shows how organizations comprise various types of working practices with distinct rationales that are not easily understood from outside of these practices. Hence, investigating the various practices that comprise what we call "organization" reveals how "the organization enacted by management differs significantly from that enacted by those doing the work of the corporation" (Orr, 1995: : 47).

Nicolini and Gherardi have both further analyzed (together and separately) working practices of different sorts, for example, restoration work (Gherardi and Nicolini, 2002a), telecardiological consultancy and telemedicine (Gherardi, 2010; Nicolini, 2006), and working in coordination and call centers (Gherardi, 2012: : 98-102). By treating practices primarily as epistemic objects, these studies have established not only conceptual but also methodological tools for studying learning and knowing in practice and how it becomes organized.

Gherardi's work has centered on an understanding of social practice as "collective knowledgeable doing" (2012: : 3). This view emphasizes that knowing is always entangled with doing and thus accounting for the material, aesthetical and ethical, linguistic, historical, and corporeal is necessary for the study of social practices. Through her work, Gherardi (see e.g. 2009a; 2010; 2011; 2016) has further contributed greatly to our understanding of various practice traditions, their interconnections and trajectories within organization and management studies.

Nicolini, for his part, has increased our understanding of how to investigate organizational practices empirically and specifically of how knowing forms in these practices. For this purpose, Nicolini has introduced the concept of site (Nicolini, 2011). This concept can be understood as a nexus of interlinked practices that are situated (contextually, locationally, historically) and relational (in relation to other phenomena). A site can be defined by how "we engage with the world and [by how] the material and linguistic practices into which we are socialized provide a background for understanding what counts as an object of knowledge, what counts as knowing subjects, and in the event what counts as possible (and "real")" (Nicolini, 2011: 604). Practices, Nicolini suggests, form 'sites of knowing' where knowing is made visible in how practitioners accomplish their everyday work and organizing; knowing transpires for example through how people speak, what they do and how they react in certain situations, through temporal and interactional ordering of the practice, and by how people use objects in the course of their activities (Nicolini, 2011: 609).

The knowing-in-practice approach also has significantly extended our understanding of the role that materiality – including its various manifestations such

as technology, tools and artifacts, places and spaces, the body – plays in organizational practices (Orlikowski and Scott, 2015; Orlikowski, 2009). In this sense, learning and knowing are always materially mediated and manifested bodily although they are not always articulable.

To conclude, the knowing in practice approach rarely provides a clear definition of social practice, but generally suggests that practices are "recurrent patterns of socially sustained action (production and reproduction)" (Gherardi 2012: p. 536) that should be understood as 'epistemological principles'. Now I will introduce an element-based understanding, which in turn provides a different type of understanding of a social practice.

2.2.3 An element-based understanding

An element-based understanding suggests that practices, in constituting and reproducing social reality, consist of interconnected elements. Researchers drawing on this perspective typically refer to the work of Andreas Reckwitz, Elisabeth Shove and colleagues (Shove et al., 2012; Shove et al., 2009), and Theodore Schatzki. For instance, a much-used definition of a practice is one that Reckwitz (2002) provides:

A 'practice' (Praktik) is a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge. A practice – a way of cooking, of consuming, of working, of investigating, of taking care of oneself or of others, etc. – forms so to speak a 'block' whose existence necessarily depends on the existence and specific interconnectedness of these elements, and which cannot be reduced to any one of these single elements. (Reckwitz, 2002: 249)

This definition of a practice emphasizes three things: the nature of action as a routinized type of behavior; the existence of several different elements like the body, the mind, things, and knowledge (among other elements that Reckwitz elaborates in later parts of the article); and the interconnectedness of the various elements. In this approach, people play the role of an agent that carries out practices:

The single individual – as a bodily and mental agent – then, acts as the 'carrier' (Träger) of a practice [...] (Reckwitz, 2002: 249-250)

Like Reckwitz, who characterizes practices as habitual and as comprised of different elements, Shove et al. (2012), treat practices as comprised of elements. In their approach, however, Shove and colleagues draw on scholars like Giddens, Wittgenstein and Bourdieu and simplify the list of elements into three categories, namely material, competence, and meanings. The material component includes objects, infrastructures, tools, and the body; competence refers to "multiple forms of understanding and practical knowledgeability" (Shove et al., 2012: 23); and meaning represents the symbolic and social significance of

participation. With this simplification, the authors basically theorize people out of practices by suggesting that practices and their dynamics – like those of change, emergence, or disappearance – are defined by interdependent relations and interconnections between these three types of elements.

Schatzki (2001a; 2001b; 2005; 2006), in turn, provides a more detailed conceptualization of a social practice by describing both the nature of activity and of other components in the practice. For Schatzki, various practices – for example management, cooking, or political practices – are essentially organized human activities.

A practice is a set of doings and sayings that is organized by a pool of understandings, a set of rules, and something I call ‘a teleoaffective structure.’ (Schatzki, 2001b: 58)

Schatzki uses quite particular language to speak about practices and hence, this definition needs further elaboration. Schatzki uses detailed terminology to speak of activity, to which he (and many others drawing on his framework) commonly refer to as ‘doings and sayings.’ However, Schatzki sees activity as a set of actions constituted by “bodily doings and sayings” (Schatzki 2001b: 48). Hence, bodily doings and sayings, like hammering or turning a steering wheel, always belong to particular actions like building a fence or making a left turn. In this sense, the set of doings and sayings are always organized by understandings, rules, and teleoaffectivity.

Understandings should be thought of as abilities related to performing the actions. For instance, knowing how to build a fence requires knowing how to hammer, eye the fence line, insert a post into a hole, and so forth. Rules refer to explicit formulations that articulate pre-existing understandings. Teleoaffectivity comprises teleology, which is an orientation towards ends, and affectivity, which refers to the emotions, beliefs, and hopes underlying how things matter. Teleoaffective structure is then “an array of ends, projects, uses (of things), and even emotions that are acceptable or prescribed for participants in the practice.” (Schatzki, 2005: 472)

Schatzki’s theorizing of a social practice has developed through time as he has taken into account or further emphasized more elements in his conceptual toolkit. Where he stresses the mind and mental organization of practices (Schatzki, 2001b) in his later writings, he recognizes materiality as intrinsic to social phenomena and introduces an ontology recognizing the relationship between practices and material arrangements. As conceptualized by Schatzki (2010a), practices transpire through material arrangements referring to a set of interconnected material entities consisting of human beings, artefacts, other organisms and things. In this view, materiality is an inseparable, yet separate sphere from practices.

Alongside materiality, another dimension in Schatzki’s theorizing of a social practice is something that he calls ‘timespace’ (Schatzki, 2009; Schatzki, 2010b). For Schatzki, practices are “temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus[es]” (Schatzki, 1996: : 89). With spatiality, Schatzki refers to places and paths ‘anchored’ in material entities. The temporal dimension of

timespace encompasses the past, present, and future dimensions of the activity (Schatzki, 2006b).

While his fundamental understanding of social reality lies in bundles of practices and material arrangements, Schatzki does explicitly take up people and their relationship to practices later in his work (Schatzki, 2017). While he acknowledges the interdependence of this relationship – that practices do not exist without people, but also that people come to be through practices – at the same time he points out that people and practices are entities with different ordering principles.

In short, the element-based understanding of a social practice sees practices from the outside and treats them as organized around recognizable entities that combine elements such as places, materiality, meaning, temporality, and people in various ways. Action is characterized by patterned and routinized performance; less agency is given to people and more agency is given to the elements of the practice.

2.2.4 Practical activity

The framework of practical activity has been developed by a group of colleagues in the Management Education Research Initiative (MERI) research group at the former Helsinki School of Economics, the present Aalto University School of Business. The concept of practical activity is directed to both researchers and practitioners by drawing attention on the one hand to different *aspects* of social practices and on the other hand to the different *orientations* people may have towards their practice (Räsänen, 2015; Räsänen and Trux, 2012).

Before going into these in more detail, it is important to briefly unpack the related concepts, namely practical activity, social practice, and practice. According to Räsänen and Trux (2012: 55), practice refers to materially mediated recurrent human activity that typically happens in the same place(s) or within the same community or network. The authors provide a lecture as an example of a practice that is usually ‘inherited’ by those who enter into it. Single practices comprise webs of practices that form social practices. An example would be economics as a social practice, which comprises the practices of researching, teaching (giving a lecture), and many other practices, like attending a conference or writing a research paper. Finally, practical activity then refers to a broader form of activity like that of engaging in academic work as a management scholar (Räsänen & Trux 2012: 55-57). In this dissertation, I primarily use the concept of ‘a social practice’ to refer to the social practice of food collectives that comprise interconnected webs of practices (e.g. producing, transporting, distributing, and cooking).

The framework of practical activity, drawing on the work of several scholars, including Pierre Bourdieu, Alasdair MacIntyre, Dorothy Holland, Charles Taylor, and Michel de Certeau, among others, suggests that practitioners, independent of the type of (social) practice in which they are engaged (e.g. a student studying management, a professor researching management, or a manager managing a business corporation), encounter four issues that have to be dealt with or resolved: *how* to do it; *what* to accomplish and achieve by doing it; *why*

do it and do it in this way; and *who* will one become by doing it this way. The first aspect, which invites an answer the question *how*, is tactical. This aspect points to the everyday doing and coping of people as reflected in the writings of the French sociologist Michel de Certeau. The tactical aspect means being curious about how people (need to) cope in places and situations designed and “owned” by others, and how, in so doing, they use the tactics available to them at that particular moment. An example of tactical action could be ‘short cuts’. These are trails made by people when they need access to places. They differ from planned roads in that they follow the logic of practical needs and not the logic of strategic planning (Thévenot, 2002). In other words, when acting tactically, people “make do with what they have” (De Certeau 1984: 20).

The second aspect points to politics and the kinds of interests, goals, or aims that practices enable or possibly direct people to pursue. The political aspect has been examined by scholars like Bourdieu and Foucault, who appear among often cited authors when power and the politics of and in practice are examined. The political aspect of a practice enables examining various interests that exist and tensions that arise from different kinds of goals and attempts to pursue them in practice. Focusing on the political aspect also points to power relations and those interests that gain the most or the least traction in the evolution of different social practices.

The third aspect to consider according to the framework of practical activity is the moral aspect, which invites investigating *why* achievement of particular goals in certain ways can be considered good and justifiable. Räsänen (2008; Räsänen, 2010) points to MacIntyre, Taylor, and Thévenot for examining the moral aspect of practices. The notion of “good” (Thévenot, 2001; MacIntyre, 1984) denoting the basis for people’s action – and their capability to make judgements, be motivated for, and justify their action (see also Vaisey, 2009) – appears as a foundational concept for understanding morality in practice. As MacIntyre’s conceptualization of a social practice has been relevant for the conceptual framework of this study, I will introduce it in more detail in the next sub-chapter (2.2.5) to avoid repetition.

Lastly, there is the personal aspect of practical activity, namely the question of *who* one becomes by doing something with particular means, goals, and motives and/or justifications. Räsänen and colleagues refer to people as subjects or practitioners (cf. Schatzki, 2017) and by drawing on the work of Dorothy Holland, among others, suggest that people do not merely participate in practices as actors (Callon, 1999) or as carriers (Reckwitz, 2002), but that practices also do something to people; they produce subjects. In other words, human beings (may) develop or try to support a certain kind of identity through the practices in which they engage. In this sense some practices may be more appropriate to support a certain kind of identity or lifestyle. For instance, a person aiming at ‘ecologically and ethically conscious living’ could be likely to participate in practices like vegetarianism, sustainable consumption, or pursue green work.

In sum, the framework of practical activity suggests that practices and their ordering effects can be examined from the perspectives of four different aspects. In any given situation and within any given practice, all four aspects are present

in that “the practitioner has to deal (at least) with the four issues and be able to switch orientations” (Räsänen, 2015: 6). What is interesting then, is not only how people (tactically) engage in a practice and what kind of (political) interests drive them, but also why people do something in a particular way (morals), and who are these people (becoming) as practitioners (subjects). In this view, practices are not merely given to subjects, but neither do subjects autonomously construe practices; rather, practices have ordering effects on people in as much as people have ordering effects on practices.

2.2.5 Alasdair MacIntyre’s conceptualization of a social practice

Alasdair MacIntyre, a philosopher (and thus) not primarily engaged in empirical work, had an agenda for bringing the moral to the center of understanding human practice. Specifically, he wanted to develop language to speak about and better understand questions of morality not as a relativist/emotivist or universalist rationality, but as practical rationality.

Central for understanding a social practice as proposed by MacIntyre is the distinction he makes between a practice and an institution. While practices are formed around realization of internal goods by achieving certain standards of excellence, institutions are concerned about achieving external goods. The conceptualization of a social practice provided by MacIntyre follows this line of thinking.

By a practice I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended. (MacIntyre 2008: 187)

Internal goods refer to ‘goods’ that come from successfully engaging in a practice itself and not by using that practice as a means for pursuing some other goods, goods external to the practice. In contrast to achievement of internal goods, which are goods “for the whole community who participate in the practice” (MacIntyre, 2008: 190-191), external goods such as fame, power, profit and success are “always some individual’s property and possession” (ibid: 190). Hence standards of excellence are unspoken, embodied ways of doing things while being subjected to what Gherardi (2011: 49) refers to as the “normative accountability of various performances.”

When entering a practice people become subjected to its logic, or rationality (Orr, 1995; Bourdieu, 1990), which they can only learn by practicing.

A practice involves standards of excellence and obedience to rules as well as the achievement of goods. To enter into a practice is to accept the authority of those standards and the inadequacy of my own performance as judged by them. It is to subject my own attitudes, choices, preferences and tastes to the standards which currently and partially define the practice. (MacIntyre 2008; 190)

Pointing to practices like farming and fishing, architecture and construction, MacIntyre gives an example of the intrinsic relationship between standards of excellence and internal goods:

The aim internal to such productive crafts, when they are in good order, is never to catch fish, or to produce beef or milk, or to build houses. It is to do so in a manner consonant with the excellences of the craft, so that there is not only a good product, but the craftsman is perfected through and in her or his activity. (MacIntyre 1993: 284, in Moore & Beadle, 2012)

For MacIntyre, it is the intrinsic connection between means and ends (c.f. Parker et al. 2014) that defines a practice. A practice engages people to value how they take part in the practice, which cannot be merely reduced to what the outcome is or will be. In a sense, taking a journey is no any less important than arriving at a destination; in fact, there cannot be a destination without a “proper” journey. Understanding this relationship between standards of excellence and internal goods as definitive of a social practice is important because not only does it characterize the nature of a social practice, it also shows that when institutionalized with external goods entering into the equilibrium, a moral conflict is likely to arise for practices that order action on grounds different from those used by institutions.

To conclude, understanding the moral ordering principles of practices is central to MacIntyre’s conceptualization of a social practice. Moreover, MacIntyre offers an account in which practices are contrasted with institutions; practices are organized around the exercise of internal goods through standards of excellence specific to a particular social practice, whereas institutions are organized around the exercise of external goods by which practices are not valuable in themselves (as ends) but become means for achieving goods external to the social practice itself.

2.2.6 Towards a social practice approach

The practice theoretical approaches that I introduced above all provide distinct conceptual frameworks for studying practices, their characteristics, and their ordering effects (see Table 2). The knowing-in-practice approach focuses primarily on the epistemic nature of practices and is interested in studying how knowing – as the ability to use tools, express oneself and one’s actions in appropriate language, follow the right tempo, and be normatively accountable for one’s performance – transpires in and through practice. According to the element-based understanding, practices are organized around specific elements that come together in different combinations. It emphasizes examination of these elements and their interlinkages. The practical-activity approach suggests that social practices encompass (at least) four issues, namely tactical, political, moral, and personal, which people encounter and need to resolve when participating in a social practice. These four issues can be thought of on the one hand as orientations of people towards their practice and on the other hand as four

aspects of a social practice. While they are entwined in practice, they can be separated analytically for examining how social practices shape and organize people and how people might in return shape and reorganize their practices. And finally, MacIntyre's conceptualization of a social practice points to traditions in the examination of practices and in relation to this, emphasizes the moral nature of practices.

Table 2. Review of practice theoretical approaches and their main premises

Social practice approach	Conceptualization of a social practice / main premises of the approach	Underlying assumption on what organizes / orders the practice
Knowing in practice (Orlikowski, 2002; Gherardi, 2006; Brown and Duguid, 2000; Orr, 1995)	No clear definition of a social practice, practices are generally seen as - comprising recurrent patterns of socially sustained action (production and reproduction) - epistemological principles and - collective knowledgeable doing. Practices are sites for learning; knowing transpires in (a) practice through sayings and doings. Practices are material, temporal, spatial, embodied, aesthetic, contextual; they denote an interactional order that holds practitioners normatively accountable for their performance An organization comprises a web of practices	"Knowing regime"
Element-based understanding (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki 2001a, 2001b, 2006; Shove et al. 2012)	Practices comprise elements (such as materiality, meanings, competence, body, language) and activities (routinized types of behavior, performance, sets of doings and sayings). Practices comprise sets of sayings and doings that are organized by a pool of understandings, a set of rules, and a teleoaffective structure.	Elements (e.g. materiality, competence, rules, meanings, language) and their interconnections
Practical activity (Räsänen 2008, 2009, 2010, 2015; Räsänen and Trux, 2012)	Separates the concepts of practical activity, social practice, and a practice. Four aspects that people have to deal with when participating in a social practice: how to do it, what to accomplish, why in this way, and who one becomes by doing it.	Aspects (tactics, politics, morals, subject formation)
MacIntyre's conceptualization of a social practice (MacIntyre 1984; 2008)	Practice is a coherent and complex form of socially established activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve standards of excellence appropriate to the social practice. Social practice is formed around internal goods whereas institutions are formed around achievement of external goods.	Internal goods & standards of excellence

By familiarizing myself with the various practice theoretical approaches reviewed in this chapter, my understanding of "a social practice" has deepened as I have acquired the empirical basis needed for conceptualizing it. While starting from an element-based understanding of a social practice, my research became profoundly influenced by the "knowing-in-practice" approach. This move was triggered by a realization – arising from the fieldwork and confirmed by analyzing the data – that the element-based approach directed me to treat the social practice of food collectives via predetermined categories and kept me from exploring the emergent nature and organization of this practice *from within*. The knowing in practice approach has helped me examine the relationship between doing and knowing and particularly focused my attention on the learning occurring within the food collectives' practices. The framework of practical activity has directed me further to see people alongside the elements and to *tune into different aspects* of practices. Finally, a MacIntyrian approach has opened up a

holistic and humane way of seeing a social practice and realizing the importance of the moral aspects in any kind of socially established activity – particularly in an emerging one. As I will elaborate later on (Chapter 6), I have mobilized some of these approaches at different stages of my research and used others in the background of the independent empirical essays included in this dissertation. This path of trying to understand and conceptualize a social practice from within my own empirical research has led me towards what I call “a social practice approach.”

As my reading of practice theory deepened, I realized that the existing practice theoretical approaches departed from established practices. This makes exploration of emerging practice less than straightforward. Next, before reviewing the current understanding of the emergence of social practices and presenting a synopsis of the conceptual framework, I will introduce an understanding of exchange as a social practice.

3. Theorizing the emergence of exchange as a social practice

21st century economics will be practiced first, theorized later. (Raworth, 2018)

In this final theory chapter, I discuss the emergence of new social practices. By drawing on the understanding of social practice presented above and on anthropological and economic sociological studies, I conceptualize exchange as a social practice (chapter 3.1). This way, I suggest making the social practice of exchange the focus of exploring emergent economic order (i.e. organization). I further review studies on emergence of social practices in general and reflect some of these studies in the light of the practice theoretical approaches presented above (chapter 3.2). I conclude this chapter with a synthesis of the conceptual framework of the dissertation (chapter 3.3.).

3.1 Exchange as a social practice

In order to explore how exchange as a social practice emerges, one needs to be able to say what defines exchange as a social practice. To do this, I draw primarily on anthropological and sociological literatures and on the understanding of social practice presented previously to explore what in particular characterizes exchange as a social practice.

While modern economic theory begins from the assumption that desires cannot be saturated and from this standpoint assumes that it is economically rational to (re-)turn surplus to the economic domain as a source for growth, the philosophical origins of economic rationality suggest on the contrary that in *oikonomia* (economy), households aim to meet only their needs and generate surplus to liberate themselves from economic activity (Leshem, 2016). These different underlying assumptions arising from distinct research traditions reveal how characterization of a social practice and of the rationality it is assumed to hold is a question that depends on the tradition(s) drawn on in conceptualizing particular social practice (see also MacIntyre, 1984). Hence, it is important to understand that also the concept of exchange, like the concept of social practice, is subject to very distinct conceptualizations depending on the research tradition drawn on.

Indeed, where economists tend to reduce exchange to transactions and are interested in how, through the aggregate of these transactions isolated from contextual factors, ownership rights are transferred and value is defined through pricing mechanisms (Callon and Muniesa, 2005; Vargo and Lusch, 2004), anthropologists and economic sociologists have a more complex understanding of exchange as embedded in relations (Swedberg, 2005; Fligstein, 1996). In the core of this research, exchange is defined by the kinds of social and material relationships it creates and how it organizes people and their communities around these relationships.

For instance, in economic sociology the concept of embeddedness has become central in emphasizing how economic action is “embedded in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations” (Granovetter, 1985: 487). In this domain, scholars have shown how prices are not neutral valuation mechanisms but become representatives of cultural and moral values (Fourcade, 2011; Zelizer, 2000), and how materiality plays a significant role in how valuation takes place in the practices of market exchange (Callon and Muniesa, 2005; Orlikowski and Scott, 2013). But while economic sociologists have been primarily interested in studying market exchange and its underlying coordination mechanisms, much of anthropological research has primarily focused on reciprocal and redistributive exchange practices (Miller, 2002; Ferguson, 1988; Graeber, 2001).

Although they examined gift exchange from different perspectives, Mauss (1954) and Malinowski (2002) both show how relationships based on reciprocity are at the core of gift exchange; Malinowski describes gift relationships as formed between individuals whereas Mauss argued for collective reciprocity. Like much of the research in economic sociology, exploring the formation of value is at the core of these studies. Anthropological research has shown that the reciprocal nature of exchange makes objects inalienable (Mauss, 1954), meaning that any “thing” that enters the exchange always entails a life history (Kopytoff, 1986) or what Appadurai (1986) calls a “social life” of things; hence the objects of exchange literally embody the biography of their makers. In this sense, an object is not a mere object of exchange, but something that ultimately ends up constituting social relations (Lambek, 2013). Exchange is therefore not practiced for the sake of the object and *its* value, but value is instead constituted in action that the object pertains to (Graeber, 2001).

One of the profound ideas that both anthropological and economic sociological perspectives bring forth is that way in which exchange is organized creates interactional orders by assigning roles to the parties of exchange – and not only those of producers and consumers – by establishing relationships with objects, and by denoting broader moral, political, and aesthetical understandings of how valuation takes place through exchange (Anteby, 2010; Weber et al., 2008; Otto and Willerslev, 2013). Treating exchange as a social practice, then, assumes that exchange represents a broader form of activity by which economic, social and material relationships all become entwined in a web of interconnected practices, the reproduction of which sustains relationships and ultimately enables buying and selling or giving and receiving (to continue). A focus on exchange as a social practice should thus account for interactional orders and how their

reproduction in the course of exchange creates and organizes social and material relationships (Appadurai, 1986; Graeber, 2001).

3.2 Tracing how social practices emerge

To date, there has been very little research – either theoretical or empirical – on the emergence of social practices (Miettinen et al., 2009; Gherardi, 2009a). A common underlying assumption in both conceptual works informing on practice emergence as well as in the few empirical studies is that practices do not appear from nothing, and that their emergence builds on what has previously existed. In fact, when reviewing the existing literature, change, transformation, and emergence are oftentimes treated interchangeably (see e.g. Schatzki, 2013; Gherardi and Perrotta, 2011; Shove et al., 2012).

One suggestion for examining the emergence of practices is the framework provided by Shove et al. (2012) for studying the dynamics of social practices. The authors take their definition of social practice (comprising materiality, competence, and meanings) as a starting point and proceed towards an examination of the interlinkages between the elements of the social practice. They suggest that the formation of new practices or changes in existing ones can be studied by examining how these elements emerge, evolve, come together, and change. In illustrating this framework with the example of motoring, the authors explain how this practice emerged from the elements of traveling by horse-drawn carriage: the first cars resembled carriages (materiality); traveling by car assumed that a driver not only knew how to drive but also how to repair the car (competence); and car owners were wealthy people who went on adventures in their cars and spent time in nature (meanings).

Another example of practice emergence is provided in the empirical study of Gomez and Bouty (2011), who explored how a new practice of using vegetables as gastronomic ingredients in restaurants was established in the field of haute cuisine. By drawing on Bourdieu's work, the authors suggest that this practice emerged and became influential as a result of the strong habitus of a key individual (the chef), his understanding of the general expectations regarding preparation of a good meal in the field of haute cuisine, and his central position in the field. For exploring the emergence of this practice, one could also apply the framework of Shove et al. (2012) and examine how new meanings became attached to using vegetables instead of meat as the main ingredient, and how the combination of competence in cooking a good meal and the related materiality, such as tools used in the process of cooking, evolved alongside the meanings and thereby changed the practice of haute cuisine cooking. An analysis drawing on MacIntyre's understanding of a social practice could, in turn, suggest that rather than introducing an entirely new practice, a new internal good (that a good meal comprises vegetables and the ways of cooking them) was introduced into an existing practice (haute cuisine cooking).

In theorizing the emergence of social practices, scholars have further suggested that repetition has effects that transform existing practices (Feldman, 2000; Feldman and Pentland, 2003) or create new ones as small changes

accumulate in the existing practice (Schatzki, 2013) or as an innovation is triggered within existing activities (Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007). Moreover, external factors such as a decision concerning a new public-private partnership alliance (Bjørkeng et al., 2009), introducing new regulation (Gherardi and Perrotta, 2011), or new materiality like telemonitoring devices (Nicolini, 2010; 2011) may result in formation of new practices.

Overall, the review of the very few studies on practice emergence suggests that the emergence of a social practice is oftentimes understood as something that departs from what previously existed and not as something entirely new to the world. As Shove and Pantzar (2005) in their study on inventing and reinventing Nordic walking point out, newness is always contextual in that it comes from how people locally participate in creation and in performance of something new to them. Hence, understanding emergence seems to depend on whether one is zooming in or out of the practice (Nicolini, 2009b) and on contextual factors assuming that practices are situated and embedded in localized conditions (Shove and Pantzar, 2005).

Taking all this together, one can conclude that a key issue in how emergence of social practices is understood is fundamentally related to either taking the elements defining the practice as a starting point (Shove et al., 2012), explaining emergence by mobilizing a practice-theoretical framework (Gomez and Bouty, 2011), or describing the endogenous or exogenous factors or processes in emergence (Bjørkeng et al., 2009; Schatzki, 2013; Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007). As I have not directly followed any of these principles, I will provide a synthesis of the way emergence of a social practice is approached in this study in the next chapter.

3.3 When practices end up ordering us – in search of a theoretical framework

As the review of the practice theoretical approaches above (Chapter 2) shows, different conceptualizations emphasize different elements or aspects of practices and thereby generate alternative understandings on *what* or *who organizes or produces order in practice* (reviewed in Table 2). Essentially, adopting “a social practice approach” suggests that a key issue in understanding the emergence of social practices and (their) emergent order is that practices are by definition *social*.

As Feldman and Worline (2016: 307) note, “practices are enacted through the actions of individuals but are never simply the actions of an individual.” In this sense, individuals as such do not create practices, but practices are collective endeavors. Indeed, several scholars bring up the social character of practices. Referring to the shared aspects of practices, Reckwitz (2002: 250, emphasis original) speaks of “*qualities of a practice* in which the single individual participates,” while Gherardi (2016: 686) emphasizes that practices are “collective knowledgeable doing.” Kemmis (2009a: 33) points to social relationships that are formed and speaks of “extra-individual features” of practices. He suggests that participation in practices is always influenced by what he calls “mediating

preconditions” that structure how a particular practice unfolds through sayings, doings, and the ways of relating to other people and to the practice itself. Nicolini (2011) speaks of “knowing regimes” through which practices produce interactional orders and thereby influence the ways people (can) take part in practices, how they speak and what they say, how they use tools, and what kinds of expectations they have in relation to other people.

Similarly to pointing towards their social aspects, several scholars emphasize that practices are normatively *shared* and assume common understanding among the individuals of the meanings of the activity that constitutes a practice (Gherardi, 2009c; Schatzki, 2001b; Shove et al., 2012). In this sense, it seems that emergence of practices always implies that people organize around a common outcome (Miettinen and Virkkunen, 2005) or shared meanings (Schatzki, 2001b; Shove et al., 2012) and in so doing develop practical understandings, skills, and knowings regarding how to collectively pursue the aspired outcomes and meanings and be accountable for one’s performance to other practitioners (Gherardi, 2011).

Taking all this together, the question still remains: how, then, do emerging practices end up ordering us? Following Nicolini (2009b, 2012), who shows the benefit of switching theoretical lenses in studying practices and in generating an understanding of them, I have adopted an eclectic approach and explored food collectives by capitalizing on distinct practice theoretical perspectives (introduced in Chapter 2). However, in my empirical essays (introduced in Chapter 6) I have not only been switching practice theoretical but also conceptual lenses by digging into the concept of exchange through related interdisciplinary literature. This movement between conceptual and theoretical considerations has been essential in inquiring into the ordering effects of emerging food collectives and in forming an understanding of social practices in general and of the social practice of food collectives in particular. Next, before going into methodology (Chapter 5), I will introduce food collectives and locate them in the broader institutional context this providing the empirical research context for this study.

4. The research context: Food collectives in Finland

Every week I receive inquiries like “I’d like to join a food collective, I’d like to get access to organically produced local food, I want to start a food collective.” And each time I have to say that I don’t have this information [on local farms] and there is no button you can push to get this information. You need to do all the work yourselves. To go search for the farmers, establish relationships, tell them, tell everyone how a food collective works. And give the farmers estimates of how much they would be selling this way. Maybe, this [food collective activity] is now starting to move forward, these issues have been discussed but nothing has happened. (Founder)

In this chapter, I will introduce food collectives and describe their functioning in more detail. First, I will start by providing some background on the institutional context and environment in which food collectives started to appear in Finland and relate these organizations to other local food initiatives. I will then describe how food collectives operate from three perspectives: that of the participating households and of the farmers and other food suppliers, and of what is required to organize a food collective.

4.1 Institutional environment

In Finland, people have traditionally had substantial confidence in authorities and industry representatives (Lammi and Pantzar, 2012). However, several food scandals and media reports on questionable production practices in the global agri-food business have increased awareness of the safety and sustainability problems of industrial agriculture and many have started to question the reliability of business corporations and food science in general. Also, food policy has received considerable criticism.

Small-scale farmers in Finland have suffered from EU policies implemented since the 1990s. In the main, these policies have sought to support modern, centralized, and large-scale agriculture. They have decreased the number of small farms and increased the number of medium-sized and specifically large farms of more than 100 hectares (Tilastokeskus, 2014). This tendency is the same throughout Europe; the current average farm size in Finland is 40 hectares, or more than twice the EU average of 16 hectares (Eurostat, 2015).

At the same time supermarkets have taken over many small grocery stores in Finland; today the food market is dominated by two retail chains, which together hold a market share of over 80% in Finland (PTY, 2017). My pilot study on local food initiatives in Finland during 2010 revealed that markets for local food barely existed in the late 2000s and thus it was extremely difficult to access either local or organic food. Supermarkets offered local and organic produce on a very limited basis and also charged high prices for the produce. There were only a few marketplaces, or farmers' markets, around the country, and most of them did not operate year-around. Also, the locations of the marketplaces were also inconvenient for people doing their everyday grocery shopping. Some newly founded enterprises with physical stores or web-stores specializing in local produce existed, but again prices were high, making them inaccessible to ordinary people on an everyday basis.

Since 2010 several institutional actors including public sector organizations such as the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, the Agrifood Research Institute (MTT), and the Finnish Innovation Fund (Sitra) acknowledged the challenge faced in accessing local food and started to identify the bottlenecks that needed to be removed to revitalize local and organic food markets in Finland (Mäkipeska and Sihvonen, 2010; Kurunmäki et al., 2012). By this time, however, citizens were already taking action to regain access to the origins of food and food collective organizations among other local food initiatives were growing in number throughout the country.

4.2 Surfacing of food collectives

The first food collectives in Finland, but also in Europe more broadly, appeared in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Crivits and Paredis, 2013; Nikkilä, 1991). In Finland, food collectives remained fairly unknown for nearly 20 years until taking off in the 2010s and establishing themselves as one way to access and purchase locally farmed food on a regular basis. Today, there are over one hundred food collective organizations and other similar groups operating in Finland. Taken together, they comprise thousands of household members and hundreds of farmers.

The appearance of food collective organizations can be placed in a historical continuum with different food movements, such as the organic movement, the fair-trade movement, the local food movement, and various other 'alternative' food movements. While the organic movement, which can be traced to the early 1900s, began as a farmers' movement emphasizing the importance of sustainable farming, the movement for local food is more recent, having arisen at the turn of the 21st century in response to the international "post-war food order" (Friedmann, 1982; Pollan, 2006). As part of a wider global phenomenon representing a switch to alternative food economies (Cone and Myhre, 2000; Allen et al., 2003; Goodman et al., 2012), and unlike the fair trade and the organic labels which primarily address production practices, the local food movement criticizes globalization of food value-chains and argues specifically for localized distribution chains. It focuses on the scale of production (Carroll and

Swaminathan, 2000), the places of production (Allen et al., 2003), community building, and citizen participation (Cone and Myhre, 2000; Hinrichs, 2000).

Seen from the perspective of various food movements, food collectives appear to combine the aims of different movements by addressing trade fairness, sustainable farming practices, and more localized and communal food distribution. As mentioned at the beginning of the introduction, individual people participating in or starting a new food collective may have distinct reasons for so doing. The most common reasons are related to a desire to eat pure and tasty food that is ecologically and ethically produced and offered at reasonable prices, to support local producers, and to create a neighborhood community. Indeed, compared with many producer-led initiatives, food collectives are citizen-led as people living in cities increasingly feel that they have lost control over the food they eat and are thus motivated to seek access to “good” food through direct connections with local farmers. Thus, while closely related to other similar models of organizing access to local food, such as CSA, food co-ops, or farmers’ markets, food collectives differ in three basic respects (See Figure 2).

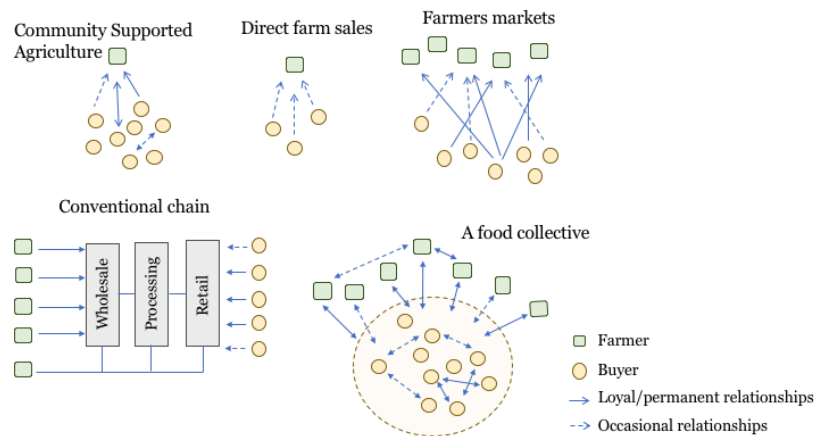


Figure 2. Ways to access local food

First, the participants make collective purchases by placing orders with each farmer as a group, not as individuals. Second, food collectives order all their food in advance in contrast to everyone choosing their purchases on the spot. And third, unlike ordinary shopping, in food collectives people need to organize the entire exchange infrastructure from harvesting to ordering and from transporting to distributing in order to get food from the fields to the fridges.

4.3 Food collectives in action

4.3.1 General characteristics of food collectives

In essence, food collectives are groups of people who collectively procure local and/or organic food directly from farmers and other food suppliers and distribute it among the participating households. Founded mainly by women who are

usually mothers, food collectives form around a shared goal of gaining access to local and organic food. All food collective organizations operate on a non-profit basis, and whereas a few groups have registered as associations or cooperatives, most of those founded to date operate without any specific organizational form.

Food collectives vary greatly in size with from 15 to 200 participating household members and from a few to dozens of food suppliers. They can be found all around Finland with the densest concentration in the south of the country, specifically in the capital region. Food collective organizations do not merely differ on the basis of size and location, but also in terms of how they organize food procurement in practice. Each food collective adapts to its surroundings and local conditions and ends up representing the needs and wants of its participants.

Hence, who supplies what kind of food varies and some collectives deal with only one or a few farmers, while others purchase from dozens of food suppliers and place orders through organic wholesale distributors. Size also plays a role in food collectives, because in smaller collectives of 15 to 30 members, people are expected to become active participants who do not merely order the food but also regularly volunteer to distribute it, while in bigger collectives comprising more than 40 members, groups of more or less active participants are more likely to form.

What further distinguishes food collectives from, for example, regular supermarkets is that food is always ordered in advance. Although all food collectives operate year-round, some do their ordering and distribution approximately once a month; others operate on a weekly or biweekly basis. I will next zoom inside food collectives and describe how these organizations function from the perspective of their participants (for more elaborate description of different practices that comprise food collectives see Appendix 1 in Essays 2 and 3).

4.3.2 Being a household member

As a household member in a food collective, you are allowed to place orders regularly and have access to all the foodstuff being procured. In order for a food collective to function properly, it needs enough people to place orders on a regular basis. Hence, the primary task of participating households is to order and fetch the food on time. Since each organization functions on a volunteer basis, as a household member you are expected to take part in the food distribution process.

While ideally, everyone would order food on a regular basis, in practice you are not obliged to do so. Consequently, in bigger collectives this means that some order only occasionally when there is a specialty food like organic meat or berries is available, and others may even become members without ever ordering anything.

To order the food, you need a technological medium: usually an excel sheet, a link to Google docs, a “web store” accessed via email, or Facebook. Each of the ordering platforms provides a list of available food items, information concerning the produce, and prices. To place an order, you need to enter your name and indicate the food items and amounts; you also have to place the order on time.

Orders are placed a few days or a week before the food arrives and can be fetched from the distribution place. Depending on the food collective in question, you pay for the ordered items via bank transfer immediately after placing the order, after receiving the food, or by cash when picking up the food. Distribution takes place during a specific time-frame at a specific place and you have to plan your schedule to pick up the food on time. Distribution is a social event where you as a participating household can meet other people and interact with other members and occasionally with the farmers as well. You may also simply greet other people, but most likely, you will stay to chat, exchange news, share information about the farmers and the produce, and occasionally exchange cooking tips.

As a household member, you also accept uncertainty of supply; the produce does not always arrive or the amounts do not always match those ordered. Finally, after receiving the food and bringing it home, you need to prepare and cook it or store it for later use.

4.3.3 Being a farmer

As a farmer, you will be able to sell your food directly to several households without any middlemen. You may also participate in supplying food to a food collective even if you are not a farmer but engage in foraging or processing food. You may be a fisher(wo)man, a seasonal berry picker or a grandmother/grandfather who picks mushrooms as a hobby, a home-baker, or simply have apple trees growing in your garden that produce a surplus.

While as a farmer you will most likely be contacted by a food collective representative, although you may also offer your produce directly to a collective. When a contact has been made, you need to negotiate the terms of delivery and other issues related to the exchange with each food collective separately. Although you will usually be expected to transport the food to the distribution place, it is also possible that someone comes and picks up the produce directly from your farm. You will not make formal contracts with the collective but commit to operate on the basis of verbally agreed principles.

Since household members commit to distributing the food, you can deliver the food in bulk without packing it separately for each member. Moreover, you are not expected to deliver specific amounts each week; the amounts are negotiable and you may even adjust each delivery according to yield. At the same time, you do not always know how much will be ordered and need to adapt to uncertainty in demand.

As a farmer, you usually do not need to deal with individual orders and payments, but receive only one of each from the entire food collective, which lifts this burden from your shoulders. While a food collective provides you with a unique opportunity to sell your produce directly to households, it also requires you to transport sometimes rather small amounts to the distribution places and therefore as a farmer you need to consider whether and how you benefit from the arrangement.

4.3.4 Organizing a food collective

As food collectives are based solely on volunteer labor, organizing requires a lot of work from its participants. Household members have the main responsibility for organizing. Founders of a collective usually end up as coordinators, sharing tasks with other members. Each collective shares responsibility among household members differently.

While in larger food collectives a small core group or ‘group of actives’ is usually formed and does most of the work, in smaller collectives tasks are divided more evenly among the household members. These tasks include establishing relationships with new farmers and communicating with existing ones, coordinating orders and transportation of food, communicating with household members, coordinating volunteer labor and arranging distribution, paying the bills, and keeping the books.

The most essential tasks in operating a food collective are arranging to order the food and organizing enough volunteers to distribute it. Hence, having enough people that order actively and coordinating volunteer labor effectively are crucial functions. Since each collective organizes its distribution in a somewhat different manner, the need for volunteers also varies. In some collectives household members are needed to open doors for farmers who may deliver their produce during the day, while other collectives distribute the food at locations to which the farmers themselves have access.

While food collectives order food from the same suppliers on a regular basis and with few changes in the content of orders and terms of delivery, household members need to open each order and reconfirm each delivery separately. Since much of the produce is seasonal and comes from local small-scale farmers, there is also a need to communicate with farmers about what food items are available and in what volumes, and then communicate any changes to the household members.

When the food is distributed the correctness of the delivery is verified and the food sorted out according to each order, including any weighing and repacking. After all the household members have picked up their food, the distribution venue is cleaned. Depending on the food collective, volunteer work requires from a couple of hours a month to several hours a week.

Oftentimes household members notice changes in a delivery only during distribution, which requires them to deal with too much produce or too little. Uncertainty is always present and compared with ordinary grocery shopping; a food collective may appear to be an insecure and labor-intensive method for acquiring local and organic food. In fact, members of some collectives do get tired and question whether the amount of work they need to put into organizing is justified by the benefits of access to particular kinds of produce. At the same time, other participants say that they do not consider the work excessive because they value what they get from their efforts.

In this chapter, I have provided the context for the study and described the functioning of food collectives to give readers an opportunity to relate to the participants in food collectives, both the households and the farmers. In the following, I will describe my methodological choices and considerations to

provide readers with an understanding of how I represent the emergence of food collectives as a social practice for exchange in this dissertation.

5. Methodology

‘[P]ractice’ is not only a theoretical agenda but a methods one, as well. (Miettinen et al., 2009: : 1314)

In this dissertation, ethnography has been the guiding principle for doing qualitative research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). In practice, this has meant participating in the daily activities of food collectives for extended periods, observing and asking questions regarding people’s everyday lives as they participate in food collectives, reflecting on experiences, and collecting multiple types of relevant data in the process. As the methods used for generating data and the analysis process have been described in more detail in each of the essays, in this chapter, I focus on expanding an ethnographic approach to the study of practices, elaborating on the research process and introducing the data analysed in this dissertation. I conclude by reflecting on the choices made during the research and the analytical processes.

5.1 Studying practices ethnographically

The ways in which practices are empirically studied varies greatly among organizational scholars (see e.g. Miettinen et al., 2009; Gherardi, 2009a; Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011). Researchers typically conduct interviews or combine interviews with observation (Nicolini, 2011; Schultze and Orlikowski, 2004; Gherardi and Nicolini, 2002b; Lok and De Rond, 2013), although archival and statistical data as well as illustrative cases are used in the study of social practices to an equal extent (Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Shove et al., 2012; Gherardi, 2012; Orlikowski and Scott, 2015). While the traditional qualitative research guides provide little methodological assistance for studying social practices, Gherardi (2012) and Nicolini (2009a, 2009b) have both contributed to development of methodological and practical aids.

With the aim of showing how knowing and doing in different working practices are entwined, both scholars provide a holistic toolkit for studying the various interconnected components of practices including their linguistic, embodied, contextual, material, aesthetic and normative features. For this purpose, Gherardi (2006; 2012) has introduced a “spiral case study” with which a researcher moves between different levels (e.g. individual, collective, organizational, or institutional) and by investigating several cases within a specific

research setting is capable of capturing the micro-level inter-connections between the various components of the practice, after which the focus is shifted to exploration of the macro-level connections, that is, the effects of engaging in the practice.

Nicolini has developed a technique for interviewing called “interview to the double” (Nicolini, 2009a), with the aim of capturing how work is done in practice. He has also provided a conceptual toolkit for ‘zooming in’ on a practice to study the micro-level interactions and for ‘zooming out’ to examine connections between various interlinked practices and potentially with different practice-theoretical lenses to characterize and represent social practices (Nicolini 2009a, 2009b).

Essentially, the work of both scholars has provided guidance not only for observing and studying social practices. By tracing the connections between social practices and a larger set of practices they enable researchers to comment beyond the social practices themselves. Even though both scholars encourage ethnographic fieldwork, they say little about ethnographic practice itself.

Ethnographic practice can on the one hand refer to ethnography as a means of learning and representing (Van Maanen, 1988) or on the other hand serve as a set of methods (Miettinen et al., 2009; Van Maanen, 1979b). Whereas the former approach is more typical among anthropologists, and even sociologists who have engaged in writing ethnographies (see e.g. Kondo, 1990; Malinowski, 2002; Bearman, 2005), the latter is far more common in the field of organization and management studies, where scholars studying organizational practices oftentimes generate data through observation, various types of interviews (including informal conversations), and even shadowing (Czarniawska, 2014).

In the study of practices, it seems valid to ask whether practices can be at all understood and described without engaging in them. In this sense, understanding the microdynamics of everyday interactions and being able to reflect the practice back to the practitioners (Eikeland and Nicolini, 2011) might suggest more than (merely) observing the observed. While combining a set of qualitative methods into what can be called an ethnographic approach enables study of practices “from the native’s point of view” (Geertz 1983, cited in Miettinen et al 2009), Van Maanen (1979a: : 539) suggests that through a deeper ethnographic inquiry, assuming participant observation and extended periods of time in the field, it becomes possible to ask “what is it to be rather than to see a member of an organization,” a question that to me seems to capture the essential distinction between *observing and being (the) observed*.

In this study, ethnography is then considered an analytic description of historically and culturally situated social practices; it assumes that the researcher becomes immersed in the everyday lives of the observed as a participant-observer to capture the language and reasoning of the people under study and to make sense of and relate to their surroundings, actions, and the objects used by them in their settings (Miettinen et al., 2009). Studying practices ethnographically implies not imposing concepts defined a priori (or at least being conscious of any pre-existing concepts), but allowing for the potential emergence of new conceptualizations from the practices under study. Researchers do not go into

the field to find facts to illustrate a theory or a concept, but engage instead in empirical discovery and conceptual development by tying their own experiences into the ethnographic tale (Van Maanen 1979a, 1988) – something that I experienced in conducting the present study.

I will next elaborate on the process of engaging in an ethnographic inquiry on food collectives. My inquiry has been as much a learning process into the study of social practices as it has been an investigation of “what this is a case of.” I believe this made it possible to be reflective of the conceptual frameworks that seemed powerful at the time of my study and to pay closer attention to the observations, experiences, and conceptualizations arising from the field (Van Maanen, 1979a; Hutchins, 2012).

5.2 Research process and data

As organizational researchers who aim at publishing in high-quality outlets, we are expected to plan carefully before “collecting” the data and even more so to validate the research process afterwards, showing that it leads systematically to the findings and contributions. However, this dissertation is characterized by an emergent research design (Wiedner and Ansari, 2017) that was guided by opportunity and learning arising from the field. How I now represent the process of my PhD research is a reconstruction of past events and of the choices I made at particular points in time. I describe this process with the help of my research diary and by reflecting back on the several research papers I wrote during the process.

This study began with broad interest in local solutions to challenges posed by the global food system (reviewed in Chapter 1). To learn more about this phenomenon, I conducted a pilot study in 2010 in Finland to find out more about how people access local food in their everyday lives. I interviewed and talked to several people including food activists, local food producers, grocery store owners, and representatives of agricultural research institutions. I found out about food collectives, joined one myself, visited several seasonal farmers’ markets, small farms, and community gardens and learned about urban farming. At the time, I was reading articles and reports about local food and was particularly drawn to the literature on food movements and alternative food networks (Friedmann, 2005; Allen, 2010; Starr, 2010; Goodman et al., 2012). By familiarizing myself with this literature, I became more aware of the empirical context and became particularly interested in the literature on social movements and markets (Davis et al., 2008; Soule, 2012; King and Pearce, 2010).

At that time, I chose to focus on food collectives to deepen my understanding of these organizations because food collectives were not well known and barely recognized by the major institutional actors in Finland. Without a conscious decision, I became engaged in an ethnographic practice. I began to search actively for food collectives through what can be described as snow-ball sampling (Noy, 2008; Heckathorn, 2011) because obtaining information about other food collectives appeared possible only by talking to the founders, coordinators, or members of the existing food collectives. Via this method, I realized that I was

dealing with an emerging setting as locating food collectives through official routes such as the Internet, or distributor catalogues was not possible.

After a year, I had gained access to three different food collectives of which I had also become a member. I was able to follow the work of coordinators closely and gain insight from my own participation. As I became more interested in understanding the everyday practices of food collectives, I turned to practice-theoretical literature. At this stage my observations started to depart radically from what I was reading about social movements making markets on the one hand and about economic organizing taking place outside the boundaries of formal organizations (as reviewed in Chapter 2) on the other. Stepping back and reflecting on these frameworks led me to turn completely to the practice-theoretical approach, which was also a methodologically grounded choice (Gherardi, 2012) as I started to see food collectives as an emerging social practice.

In observing how new food collectives were being founded, and how both economic and social relationships seemed to be at the core of their founding, I came to question the concept of markets and shifted my attention to the anthropological and economic sociological literature on exchange. Moving away from treating food collective organization as being those of a social movement aiming at creating markets for local food (see e.g. Kurland and McCaffrey, 2016; Starr, 2010), I shifted my attention to the core practice in markets, namely exchange, emergence of which I explore in Essay 1. Adopting a practice-theoretical approach shed new light on my understanding of “exchange” on the one hand and “organization” on the other as I started to see social practice as a form of organizing (Wenger and Snyder, 2000). Essays 2 and 3 in turn derive from the pursuit to understand better the organization of food collectives as a social practice for exchange.

The core data generated for this study include participant observation in three food collectives, non-participant observation in six collectives, and interviews with representatives of food collectives located in various parts of the country, farmers, and institutional actors (Table 3). I also collected archival material including the homepages of existing food collective organizations, surveys conducted internally by collectives and news media, and regional and national reports on local food. Participation also provided access to closed online communities (Kozinets, 2002) enabling me to follow several closed and open Facebook groups founded after 2012. I was also invited to follow the meetings of food collective leaders (Table 4). Altogether, I generated data on 22 food collectives. Throughout the study, I took fieldnotes and photographs.

Table 3. Core data generated for the study

Core data	Phase I: 2010	Phase II: 2011 -2012	Phase III: 2013		Phase IV: 2014		Phase V: 2015-2017		Total	
	Interviews	Observation	Interviews	Observation	Interviews	Observation	Interviews	Observation	Interviews	Observation
Food Collect.	5	Participant observation in FC1 + 3 FC sites	Ad-hoc interviews, informal discussions	Participant observation in FC2	8	Participant observation in FC2 + FC3	2 + follow-up emails, informal discussions	Participant observation in FC 2	24	6 sites + Participant observation in three FC's
Farmers	6	5 farms	3	1 farm	-	-	2	1 farm	11	7
Local food actors	4	2 sites	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	2 sites
Institutional actors	2	-	2	-	-	-	5	-	9	-
Total	17	Participant observation 40h + 10 sites 25h	5	Participant observation 40h + 1 site 3h	8	Participant observation 50h	16	Participant observation 40h + 5 sites 12h	48	Participant observation in 3 food collectives total 250h + 16 sites 40h

Table 4. Documents and other data

Sources	Description	Years (Items)
Reports	Local food reports commissioned by different institutional actors; Food strategy reports issued by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture	2010 – 2016 (14)
Surveys	Surveys commissioned by food collectives internally to the members	2011 – 2017 (10)
Websites	Homepages of food collectives	2010 – 2017 (35)
Press Media	Articles published in two newspapers (national & regional)	1990 – 2014 (91)
Emails	Email conversations, follow-ups & interviews	2010 – 2018 (>20)
Facebook	Following 6 closed food collective groups	2012 – 2017 (>50)
Meetings	Participation in meetings of food collective coordinators	2012 – 2015 (6)

5.3 Tales from the field

Many have acknowledged that ethnographic fieldwork is not a “natural” inquiry into the everyday lives of people, but rather a very intense, messy, overly personal, and embodied experience (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Van Maanen, 1979a). The impact of fieldwork on the researcher cannot be excluded from what is eventually written down in observation notes or the research diary. As Emerson et al. (2001) point out, fieldnotes are always affected by the researcher. As I have described my fieldwork in more detail in each of the empirical essays, I will share here some of the encounters and experiences I had throughout my study, because I believe these moments have had an impact on the conduct of this research and on how I have understood, interpreted, and presented the social practice of food collectives. One encounter in particular depicts much of what I learned about food collectives.

I was supposed to interview one of the founders of a food collective in which I later became a member myself. We met in front of her apartment building, and walked down to the basement, which served as the collective’s distribution venue. We sat down at a small table (which I then learned they used for sorting out the food), and before I had time to put my recorder on the table, the woman started talking anxiously. She explained how she had just been walking around the streets in the neighbourhood tearing off posters with racist messages that had recently appeared on light poles. She explained that some time ago she found similar posters and tore them all off herself because she did not want anyone’s kids to be influenced by them. But this time she had neighbors helping her; she had prepared for the task and brought equipment for tearing off the posters. They discovered that this time the glue was different than the last time, which made it harder to tear off the posters without leaving marks on the poles. They needed swarm water and other tricks to do the job. She seemed very upset, and after she had been talking for ten minutes or so, I started to consider whether I should gently guide her towards the conversation that I was expecting us to have. I let her talk for another few minutes, when she finally took a deep breath, and said: “Ok, sorry for this, I just needed to get this out. I think we managed to tear them all off...So, what did you want to talk about?” (Field diary, 2011).

When listening to this person, I noticed myself asking: why is she telling me all this? And how does this have anything to do with food collectives? But in fact,

as I came to realize, this moment had a great deal to do with food collectives, their founders, and many of the people who took an active part in food collectives. Looking now at my fieldwork from a distance, I realize that throughout my encounters and interviews I listened to many stories filled with wrongdoing that people had experienced or were experiencing. Many of them were related to food, and others were not, but all in all, it seemed to me that these people cared. They cared for the soil, for their children, for their health, for the food they ate, and for the people around them. This way, my fieldwork became filled with listening to different stories of both member households and farmers. I also witnessed the hard work entailed in farming and organizing a food collective. I saw how food was not only talked about, but was touched, smelled, tasted, and observed. Many times, it was me who was touched – by both the food and the people.

As I learned to listen to the stories people told, I realized that what initially seemed like important questions, such as “where do you imagine this food collective will be five years from now,” were irrelevant. I realized that it was more important for people to talk about why they participate in a food collective in the first place, to share concrete experiences of cooking or eating, and to tell about organizing collectives or participating in them in very practical terms. By letting people talk more freely, I began to understand food collectives from each participant’s point of view and started asking questions that I felt relevant for these people, and not only for the purposes of my own research.

I spent altogether nearly seven years following and participating in food collectives. During this time, I had more intense periods of fieldwork and times at which I followed collectives from a greater distance. Having observed several food collectives in different regions, my fieldwork can be described as multi-sited (Nader, 2011); I observed similar kinds of practices being performed by different actors in a variety of places. While observing and participating, I aimed at understanding the functioning of food collectives at very concrete and practical levels. Through interviews, alongside guiding people to tell me about how to participate in or organize their food collective in very concrete terms (Nicolini, 2009a), I aimed at obtaining more understanding of the underlying reasoning, meanings and desires that people attached to their food collective. While I did not personally engage in founding food collectives, I was able to observe the establishment of one collective and interview people who were about to create a food collective or had recently founded one. I also gathered stories about the founding of food collectives that provided me with an understanding of how and why new food collectives emerged at different points in time and how they evolved into a new practice for exchanging food. In the following, I will describe the analytical process of this study.

5.4 Analytical process

While qualitative research in general and ethnographic research in particular is ideally inductive, that is free from any pre-existing theoretical frameworks, in practice the process of analyzing qualitative data is oftentimes abductive

(Dubois and Gadde, 2002). Conceptual development advances as the researcher continuously learns from the fieldwork and seeks better conceptual explanations for observations. In this sense, specific research questions are posed only in the course of the process (Kondo, 1990; Van Maanen, 1979a) or even at the end of it (Granqvist et al., 2017). Moreover, when studying something that has yet to become and is only emerging and taking shape at the time of the study, there are several methodological challenges that need to be considered (these are described in Essay 4, Granqvist et al., 2017).

This being said, my analysis has reflected the research process and writing the interdependent research papers for this dissertation. Each of the three empirical research papers draws on different conceptual frameworks and also on different parts of the data. The overarching aim of my analysis has been to explore the emergence of food collectives and to develop conceptual tools for representing their practices. With these aims, I sought to understand how and why new food collectives are created and sustained and thus to analyze how people do what they say they do and what they say while doing it. As I explain the analysis in more detail in all the empirical essays, I will focus here on the general analytical process underlying these essays.

5.4.1 Narrating thick description – and the theme “emergence”

At the beginning of the fieldwork I wrote several analytical theme memos on the topics emerging from the interviews and observations. These included themes like “characteristics of food collectives and their participants,” “exchange relationships,” “information and awareness,” “non-commerciality,” “price,” “quality,” “origin of food,” “empowering oneself and having a say,” and “cooperation.”

Eventually, after somewhat over a year of fieldwork, I wrote a “thick description” (Ponterotto, 2006) interpreting what I had so far observed and learned from the interviews. I produced this description by analyzing my fieldnotes, interviews, and reflections on observations on the photographs and documented material, and particularly by focusing on the narratives appearing in the interviews (Riessman, 1993). I used narrative analysis as a complementary tool to access practice through talk (Cunliffe and Coupland, 2012). This enabled me to locate ‘mini-stories’ within the interviews and analyze how people described their food collective and justified their participation in these stories. These stories also helped to locate occurrences and brought out the experiences between farmers and member households.

As Ponterotto (2006: : 543) suggests, a thick description is not a mere detailed observational report; instead, it “describes social actions and assigns purpose and intentionality to these actions.” Writing a narrative description of food collectives resulted in discovering two things: that food collectives were an emergent phenomenon and that a new kind of exchange practice unfolded through food collectives (Essay 1). Focusing specifically on the founding of new food collective organizations, on the formation of exchange relationships, and on the functioning of food collectives, and by having adopted a social practice approach, I started to identify the social practice of food collectives.

5.4.2 Identification of food collectives as a social practice

In analyzing food collectives, I identified their different practices and named them in order to gain a better understanding of the type of activity the farmers and member households engaged in when participating in a food collective. These practices are described as part of the analysis processes in Essays 2 & 3 and shown in Appendix 1 (Part 2, Essay 3). Identification of these practices across all the different food collectives revealed a web of practices within the social practice of food collectives. In identifying the practices, I used participant and non-participant observation, but also took the view that people are able to articulate parts of their everyday practices (Hitchings, 2012; Nicolini, 2009a). According to this view, people are capable of describing their practice and ways of doing things.

This part of the analysis and reflection back on the literature revealed that practices, as they become situated in emerging social and material settings, have organizing effects on the ways things are done. This made me search for “organization” by asking what organized food collectives and how they were organized. Hence, as part of the analysis of the emergence and maintenance of food collectives, I used “orders” as analytical tools for better understanding how “practices order how things are done” (Jenkins, 1994: : 442). Specifically, two types of ordering became visible in the analysis; temporal ordering became visible in how the practices of food collectives appeared to be inherently rhythmic (Essay 2), and as questions of value were at the center of the emergence of food collectives, moral ordering became an additional focal point of the analysis (Essay 3).

5.5 Reflection on the process and methodological choices

In this section, I reflect on the choices I made during the research process and on my role as a researcher. Specifically, I want to speak about the choice of conceptualizing food collectives as a social practice for exchange and the challenges related to studying emerging social practices. While I initially departed from wanting to understand organized economic action taking place outside the scope of formal organizations and ended up drawing on the social practice approach, I did not intend to impose organizational analysis on practice theory. My interest in gaining a better understanding of the organizational effects of practices has stemmed from my observations that in order to create and to sustain food collectives, people needed to organize as they strive to create *a new kind of order*. I believe that a social practice approach can provide a better understanding of the ordering effects of economic action.

During my research, I had difficulties in defining social practice, a challenge acknowledged by several practice scholars (Corradi et al., 2010; Nicolini, 2012; Miettinen et al., 2009). I thought that finding a perfect definition and/or practice-theoretical approach would provide me with a sounder conceptual toolbox for describing food collectives. Because I failed to find any one theory, I started to question the need to do so; I found that conceptualizing a social practice is not only a theoretical quest but also a methodological one. This realization led me to an abductive process through which I tried to understand the concept of

social practice through my own empirical research on the one hand and by testing various practice theoretical lenses in the different essays on the other hand. As I realized that even practice theoretical conceptualizations can result in applying pre-defined categories to an empirical phenomenon, I have also intended to be reflective with respect to the categories imposed by the practice-theoretical approaches, as I have been to the alternative frameworks that attempt to capture economic organization emerging outside formal organizations (Chapter 2).

Being reflective with respect to categories is to be reflective to concepts that should not be taken as mere mental categories but as representative of action (Hutchins, 2012; Engeström and Sannino, 2012). For me, conceptualizing food collectives as an exchange practice was empirically grounded as it captured the perspectives of both farmers and the member households. This was not, however, a concept used directly and systematically by the participants, which brings me to the last point of reflection – language.

As mentioned in the beginning of the introductory part (Chapter 1), one of the first observations that made me question social movement framing was my inability to identify frameworks common to the food collectives. This was due to the great variety of reasons given for participation, but also to the diverse language used to describe everyday practices. The language used among food collective participants was grounded in very concrete actions and concepts and appeared somewhat “primitive” in the sense that it was very descriptive. For instance, people responsible for coordinating food collectives called themselves leaders, coordinators, founders, actives, hostesses, and the like. Similarly, diverse language was used when referring to other types of tasks and practices and to aspirations as well. To me these colorful expressions appeared to represent the emergent nature of food collectives where the ways of talking and referring to things were emerging from action and had not yet been consolidated into a standardized discourse. In the process, I have thus not only needed to reinterpret various expressions in translating them from Finnish to English, which resulted in the loss of some nuances in meaning, but have also made some generalizations to simplify description of the practices and the reasons given for participation in the food collectives.

6. From farms to forks: Insights from the research papers

And then [this fisherman] calls me from the sea ice at midday that he was catching and filleting these fish with his numb hands until four a.m., but that he's running out of time now because the ferry will leave soon and asks whether it is ok if he doesn't deliver all the fish fresh but complements the delivery with some of the fish that he froze from the last catch. And I say *yes*, as long as you come back from there alive. (Coordinator)

In this study, adopting a social practice approach and drawing on anthropological and economic sociological disciplines in order to incorporate the concept of exchange has been important for broadening the understanding of economic organization. This chapter provides a summary of insights from the four essays of this dissertation. To avoid repetition, this chapter extends beyond merely summarizing the essays and reporting the findings by relating the essays to the broader research task of this dissertation and by reflecting on how the essays relate to one another.

The first three essays are empirical and examine food collectives from conceptually distinct perspectives. The first essay examines how a new type of exchange practice for local and organic food emerged in Finland in the form of food collectives (sub-chapter 6.1). The second essay brings attention to the different types of rhythm encountered by collective members and the need to deal with them in maintaining their food collective (sub-chapter 6.2). The third essay focuses on the formation of value in the practice of exchange by exploring how people in food collectives assess the “goods” around which they organize (sub-chapter 6.3). The fourth essay is methodological; it raises some issues for consideration when studying emergent phenomena (sub-chapter 6.4). Table 5 provides an outline of the research papers and of the data used and summarizes their positioning in relation to each other.

Table 5. Overview of essays

Essay	Research question	Data used	Data from the years	Social practice approach	Key concepts & conceptual frameworks	Emergence in the analysis	Focus of analysis
I	How did food collective activity become an exchange practice?	Participant observation, interviews (food collective founders, coordinators & members, farmers, institutional actors), social media discussions, archival material (news articles, reports, surveys) / 2010 - 2014	2010 - 2014	Element-based	Exchange (economic sociology, sociology of markets, economic anthropology, social exchange theory, economic theory of exchange)	Emergence in the focus of analysis	Everyday activities, elements and interlinkages between activities and elements
II	How do people accomplish rhythmic organizing within their food collective's web of practices?	Participant observation, interviews (food collective founders, coordinators & members, farmers), social media discussions	2010 - 2016	Knowing in practice	Rhythms (characterizations of time in organization studies, structural & phenomenological perspectives on time, rhythm analysis)	Emergence as a context	Webs of practices of individual food collectives and temporal aspects in the individual practices and their interlinkages.
III	How do people in food collectives assess the goods around which their social practice is organized?	Participant observation, interviews (food collective founders, coordinators & members), websites of food collectives	2010 - 2017	MacIntyre and internal goods	Value (valuation practices, anthropological theory of value as action)	Emergence as a context	Internal goods in the social practice of food collectives, sayings and doings in evaluating internal goods within individual food collectives.
IV	How to study the emergence of new fields and markets?	NA	NA	NA	Markets, fields, qualitative methods	Emergent phenomena as a focus of methodological considerations	Existing research on emergence of fields, markets and practices

6.1 Essay 1: Emergence of practice for exchange

In the essay *Emergence of practice for exchange*, presented and published in the Academy of Management Proceedings in 2015, and co-authored with Nina Granqvist, we investigate how a new practice for exchanging local and organic food emerged in the form of food collectives. This study was motivated by a desire to understand how people managed to create an alternative practice with new kinds of material and social structures for buying and selling food alongside the more traditional retailing structure in an institutional environment that did not support its establishment.

The theoretical motivation arose on the one hand from the need to better understand the microfoundations of the emergence of new practices. On the other hand, the study was driven by the observation that markets appeared to be the dominating concept for studying economic action (Fourcade and Healy, 2007), and yet studies on the emergence of markets seemed to provide very little information on how goods and services are exchanged in everyday interaction and on what enables regular exchange.

With the help of the practice perspective (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011; Schatzki, 2001a) and anthropological and sociological studies of exchange practices (Mauss, 1954; Weber et al., 2008; Graeber, 2001), the essay highlights the role of mundane interaction mediated by contextually existing and emerging elements such as materiality, places, temporality, meanings, and skills. Drawing primarily on the element-based conception of social practices (Shove et al., 2012; Reckwitz, 2002), this essay suggests that practices comprise recurrent action informed and affected by distinct, but intrinsically entwined elements that transpire and evolve through their reproduction as action unfolds.

We use Schatzki's (2001a; 2012) notion of bundles to refer to those activities that are brought together when creating and organizing a food collective in order to establish exchange relationships between households and farmers and other food suppliers. We also incorporate the idea of the proto-practice introduced by Shove et al. (2012), who in their book on the *Dynamics of Social Practices* discuss how the elements of practices, namely materiality, competence and meanings, form varying connections as they change, evolve, and travel, resulting in the transformation of practices. Proto-practice is then a combination of elements that is yet to take shape. We use this notion to demonstrate a phase in which people in food collectives were continuously re-connecting different elements that were in constant flux as the bundles of activities continued to take shape within each individual food collective. Hence the concept of proto-practice represents a situation in which activity bundles took shape within dispersed and disconnected food collectives, but did not yet form a commonly shared exchange practice that would be available for a broader scale and scope of participants.

The data generated between 2010 and 2014, in other words everything that had been generated by the time the essay was written, were used in the analysis. In order to capture the emergence from both inside and outside of the food collectives (Gherardi, 2012), we used variable sources of data, including participant and non-participant observations, interview transcripts, meeting-recordings,

documented Facebook-group discussions, and archival material including webpages and surveys. We complemented these sources with interviews with institutional actors, reports, and news articles. We used observational data, interviews, and other data referring directly to food collectives to zoom into (Nicolini, 2009b) how people founded new collectives, created exchange relationships, and organized to establish the material and social structures necessary to sustain their organization. We further complemented this data with archival material to zoom out (Nicolini 2009b) and analyze chronological events, form an understanding of the context and the role of institutional actors and of the ways in which food collectives started to share their practices.

As reported in the essay, our analysis led us to identify three phases in the emergence of the practice of exchange. The results show that food collectives connected the practices of production, distribution, and consumption through concrete activities that enabled buying and selling of food to take place on a regular basis through direct relationships. There were several obstacles that food collectives needed to overcome as the Finnish institutional environment and specifically agricultural legislation did not support activity in which food collectives were not official distributors but informally organized groups engaging in exchange. The first phase was marked by the founding of new food collectives. Founding new collectives was difficult at first because there were only a few small-scale farmers, and they were hard to locate, and there was practically no cooperation among the farmers. Individual food collectives thus needed to create material infrastructure and establish codes of conduct regarding the operations of their food collectives. This marked the second phase. In the third phase we describe how exchange emerged as the organization extended beyond individual food collectives, and the ways of exchanging and their related meanings became more widely shared and established in a recognized way and evolved into a prominent alternative to supermarkets for buying and selling food.

Where prior research brings forth an understanding that practices emerge in coherence and through systematic action of different agents (Gomez and Bouty, 2011; Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007), our findings suggest that social practices may also emerge in the form of tactics characterized by how people invent ways of doing things while engaging in a set of activities entwined with diverse elements. By shifting attention from the articulation of meaning and the establishment of common frameworks as the force driving emergence (Weber et al., 2008) to formation of sociomaterial exchange relationships, the study further contributes to a better understanding market emergence.

6.2 Essay 2: Practice(d) time as rhythmic organizing

Where the first essay examines food collectives as an emerging practice of exchange, the second essay turns attention to the temporal dynamics of exchange practices. In this essay, titled *Practice(d) time as rhythmic organizing* and co-authored with Kathrin Sele, we investigate how people need to cope with distinct rhythmic requirements in order to sustain their collective. Instead of taking emergence at the focus of analysis, we assume it as *the context* that poses

specific temporal requirements on how people are able to take part in an evolving social practice and its organizing.

As the first essay called for acknowledging the mundane characteristics of practices and pointed towards rhythmic coping and improvisation in the process of emergence, this study was motivated to further explore the role played by time in emergent forms of organizing, and what this means for how we understand social practices and their ordering effects more broadly (Schatzki, 2006b; 2009). We draw on the concept of rhythm (Lefebvre et al., 1999; Lefebvre, 2004), which allows us to examine the relationship between time/temporality and the organization of social practices, and to theorize on how the different characteristics of social practices, such as their specific materiality, or the normative understandings entailed by them, become infused into the various rhythms of the social practice.

Compared with Essay #1, we analyzed data informing us directly on the functioning of food collectives, drawing primarily on observational and interview data on member households and farmers and did not include data derived from institutional actors or the media in our analysis. Our analysis of the four core activities of food collectives, namely producing, distributing, consuming and ordering, resulted in identifying two analytically distinct types of rhythms, namely rhythms of materiality and rhythms of aspiration that were at play in food collectives and that people needed to deal with in order to maintain their food collective's web of practices. Our study shows how various characteristics of materialities such as food, places and technologies on the one hand and various types of aspirations like those related to biodiversity, community, and lifestyle on the other invoked different types of rhythms within the social practice of food collectives.

We found that dealing with these distinct rhythmic requirements was enabled by rhythmic organizing contingent on rhythmic qualities that were required by both the member households and the farmers. The acquisition of rhythmic qualities specific to social practices, in our case being available and being knowledgeable, enabled people to mediate between different types of rhythmic requirements. For theoretically capturing the sustaining of the social practice through rhythmic organizing we developed a concept of practice(d) time referring to time as it is practiced and as an everyday dealing with often competing rhythms.

Our findings complement previous research on practice-based knowing (Gherardi, 2000; Nicolini, 2011; Orlikowski, 2002) by shedding light on the temporal aspect of practices and by showing how knowing is also rhythmic. Our identification of distinct types of rhythms also contributes effectively to our understanding of social practice as a web of inherently rhythmic practices. In contrast to prior research, which assumes "a rhythm" specific to organizations (Gherardi and Strati, 1988) or social practices (Bourdieu, 1990), we argue that different types of rhythms exist simultaneously in social practices and that developing and embodying rhythmic qualities specific to social practice enable people to cope with these constantly unfolding and even conflicting rhythms. Participating in and being able to successfully organize a practice is thus not

about finding a uniform rhythm but is rhythmically contingent on continuous learning and attending to the *rhythmicity* required by the social practice.

6.3 Essay 3: A carrot isn't a carrot: Assessing value in food collectives

The third, single-authored essay, *A carrot isn't a carrot isn't a carrot: Assessing value in food collectives*, studies how valuing takes place in a social practice. As food collectives began to appear in a situation where commonly agreed standards for local food as an object of exchange did not exist, nor was there a model for organizing this type of food procurement, people needed to establish their own ways of valuing. Hence food collectives as an emergent exchange practice provide a context that makes valuing visible.

The study was motivated by a desire to understand the formation of value in exchange practices. I was particularly interested in answering the ever-open question raised at the beginning of the introduction – why on earth would anyone procure food in such a labor-intensive manner, when they can just go to the supermarket and get everything they need? To my surprise, however, valuation studies (Lamont, 2012; Kjellberg et al., 2013), although challenging the economic approach to value, still ended up conceptualizing value as input for action or output thereof (Orlikowski and Scott, 2013). The practice-theoretical perspective, however, rejects the idea that value resides in either cognition (as value frameworks) or structures (as the results of quantification or qualification of the value of an object).

In explaining value as action (Graeber 2001, 2013), the essay builds on anthropological studies of the formation of value in exchange practices (Otto and Willerslev, 2013; Graeber, 2001) as well as on valuation studies (Lamont, 2012; Helgesson and Kjellberg, 2013) to explore how people pursue what they value through food collectives. The study mobilizes the notion of “good” (Thévenot, 2001) and in particular uses MacIntyre’s 1984 concept of internal goods in the analysis. In comparison with the previous two essays on the exchange practice of food collectives from both ends of the value-chain, that of the farmer and that of the household, in this study the focus shifts to the perspective of member households to analyze valuing from their point of view.

The study finds that food collectives were not only organized around the pursuit of “good food”; people equally valued “a good price” and “a good community.” The findings show that pursuing these internal goods happened through *evaluative work* that functioned as an organizing mechanism by denoting *how* to assess the goods rather than *what* characteristics to assess. The study develops a framework comprising six degrees of valuing that shows how by participating in the various practices of food collectives, people did evaluative work in which they collectively assessed the goodness of the food, prices, and community, and engaged simultaneously in their reproduction.

The findings of this study point in two directions. First, practice-based studies commonly share the idea that practices are organized around shared understandings (Schatzki, 2001b; 2006a) and the pursuit of common values

(Kemmis, 2009a). Prior research has also shown that participating in practices assumes competence (Shove et al 2012) not only regarding what to do but how to do it, thereby implying that people are accountable for their performance to other practitioners within a social practice (Gherardi 2009a, 2011). While acknowledging that there is a connection between the ends of the practice and means by which to achieve the ends, we lack understanding of the intrinsic relationship between these two – that is, the relationship between the ends and means of organizing more broadly (Parker et al 2014) – and this calls for considering not only *how* and *what*, but also *why* (Räsänen, 2008; 2015). The study contributes to our understanding of the emergence and maintenance of social practices by suggesting that formation of the internal goods against which people evaluate their performance is definitive of social practices.

Second, food collectives stand out as a particular “site” for valuation (Nicolini, 2011), which shows that focusing only on the object of exchange may be consequential. As the essay argues, food collectives did not establish a standard or scheme for assessing the value of *what was exchanged*, but equally directed the assessment at *how exchange took place*. Thus, beyond exploring the relationship between valuing and practice-based organizing, the study offers other insight into the performative nature of value. In particular, the study complements the understanding that a social practice is associated with a “knowing regime” (Nicolini 2011: 613) by illuminating how knowing is not merely about what we know but is also intrinsically associated with how we know. The concept of evaluative work shows how assessment is not a mechanical accomplishment of qualifying or quantifying what is being valued, but rather of learning how to engage in assessing the “goodness” of what is valued collectively.

6.4 Essay 4: Doing qualitative research on emerging fields and markets

The fourth essay included in this dissertation, co-authored with Nina Granqvist and Heli Nissilä, is a methodological book chapter titled *Doing qualitative research on emerging fields and markets* published in the Routledge Companion to Qualitative Research in Organization Studies. While not explicitly directed to studying practice emergence, this essay provides methodological guidance and invites conceptual consideration in the study of emergent phenomena. Hence it ties the research process underlying all three empirical essays together and raises common questions for reflecting their conceptual and methodological choices.

Writing this book chapter was motivated by the fact that all three authors had engaged in researching emerging fields, markets, or practices and we wanted to share our experiences and the challenges we had encountered in our own research projects. Our underlying experience was that studying emergent phenomena can be rather challenging as it is oftentimes an ‘elusive object’ and thus conceptually identifying the object of study may be hard because what has emerged can oftentimes be observed only after the fact and because it is not always obvious that something emergent is being studied. Moreover, there is very

little methodological guidance to date in organizational and management scholarship that would focus specifically on the particularities arising from researching emergent phenomena.

Taking all this together, this essay provides insight into the process of studying emergent phenomena, reveals some of the key challenges and considerations faced in this task, and offers both a conceptual and practical ‘checklist’ for researchers who are engaging or planning to engage in the study of emerging fields and markets – as well as other emergent phenomena.

In going through the research process, the essay points to four topics in particular: starting the fieldwork, methods for data collection, the analysis process, and reporting the findings. With these topics, we cover questions related to the timing of the fieldwork and the nature of the data that should be taken into account when considering the theoretical framing, what in particular to pay attention to when collecting the data and what qualities the various data have, how to use the data in the analysis, and what kinds of structures may help in reporting the findings.

Moreover, to show how markets and fields have been studied in prior research, we collect some key empirical papers in the study of market and field emergence and summarize them into core categories including their theoretical framings, the empirical phenomena addressed by them, the level of analysis, data sources, analytical methods, and findings and contributions. Overall, this essay opens up many important issues and aims to guide researchers in their inquiry into emerging fields and markets. It is an opening and an invitation for further methodological contributions in this area of research.

7. Contributions

[...] modernity is generally characterized as a form of social organization wherein human needs and actions become increasingly subordinated to the technical requirements of a rapidly expanding and centralized apparatus of commodity production, distribution and consumption, instead of being rooted in the more 'organic' rhythms and textures of daily life. (Gardiner 2006: 206)

In this final chapter I will discuss the contributions of this study and provide answers to the theoretical research question raised in this dissertation. Motivated by a better understanding of how new forms of economic organizing emerge outside formal organizations, this study adopted a social practice approach and analyzed how food collectives emerged as a new exchange practice. Theoretically, I asked *how do new social practices emerge and become organized over time?* To answer this question, I conducted three empirical studies and delved into the everyday lives of food collectives. Through these three empirical research papers together with a methodological research paper produced as part of this study, this dissertation contributes to understanding of the emergence of social practices – an area that to date remains very little explored. Further, this study generates understandings of emergent economic organization by exploring the unfolding of a new exchange practice.

The sub-chapters are structured following the theoretical narrative and the structure of the Kappa (Part I). First, I reflect on how adoption of the social practice approach informs our understandings of new and/or alternative type of economic organization (7.1.). Then I discuss the contributions of the findings of this dissertation to study of the emergence of social practices (7.2.). And finally, I raise some points to consider in advancing methodological inquiry into the emergence of social practices (7.3). I will conclude by discussing some policy implications (7.4), the limitations of this study (7.5), and further suggestions to future research (7.6).

7.1 Generating understandings on economic organization emerging outside formal organizations

This study adopted a social practice approach to study how new exchange practices and forms of organizing economic activity emerge outside formal organizations. By acknowledging the changing ways in which people currently organize

economic activities, organizational analysis and the capitalist organization have been challenged on many fronts (Clegg and Baumeler, 2010; Parker et al., 2014b; Gorz and Turner, 1989; Klein, 2005). However, despite that alternative frameworks have been proposed or mobilized to enhance our understanding of “organization” on the one hand and new forms of economic organizing on the other (see e.g. Davis et al., 2005; Parker et al., 2014b; Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011; Soule, 2012; Wilhoit and Kisselburgh, 2015; Parker, 2003), they either offer predetermined frameworks or principles in explaining emergent economic order, or tend to assume markets as the core of economic activity.

So, what can a social practice approach bring to these discussions? How does it add to our understanding of new forms of economic organizing? First of all, practice-based approach has shown that *an emerging social practice brings about organization by how its activities engage and order people to participate in the practice*. Emergent organization cannot thus be merely understood by looking into organizational elements (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2011), or principles (Parker et al. 2014), or common frameworks (Benford & Snow, 2000), but one needs to look into *how order emerges from recurrent reproduction* of various practices necessary on an everyday basis for the collective pursuit of an object and account for those organizational aspects arising from the observed practices. This study has brought into light tactical, rhythmic and moral aspects, but there surely are many more to explore. This study has further shown that emerging organization, in this sense, might not be a goal in itself but arises from the activity and its purposes.

And second, adopting a social practice approach has allowed re-examination of the basic concepts of economic action and economic organization. While ‘economy’ as a concept has widespread roots and is infused with eclectic meanings, not only economists, but also scholars in the field of organization and management studies, and economic sociology have taken the concept of a market as an ideal construct (in)forming (of) the core of economic action (Akerlof, 1970; Callon and Muniesa, 2005; Fligstein, 1996; Fourcade and Healy, 2007; Zelizer, 1978). The findings presented in this study support what few scholars have brought up (see Zelizer, 1988; Graeber, 2011; Biggart and Delbridge, 2004): that markets may not constitute the empirical core of economic activity and that taking them as the leading concept and as the main focus of analysis is problematic. I elaborate on these below.

Regarding the market as the leading concept has led scholars to treat exchange by definition as *market exchange* (Araujo, 2007; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007; Weber et al., 2008), thereby ignoring that it is only one possible exchange practice and form of organizing economic activity (Biggart and Delbridge, 2004; Miller, 2002). To take the market as the central concept for studying economic action is to accept its underlying premises on, for instance, the roles assigned to consumers and producers as opposing “forces” and its assumption that competition is the ideal market coordination mechanism and price the ideal valuation mechanism (Fourcade, 2011; Aspers, 2008). My empirical findings, however, show that cooperation and establishment of new approaches to valuation were at the core of food collective exchange. Through these the traditional roles of

consumers and producers started to amalgamate, assuming redistributive and reciprocal relationships and not dyadic one-time-exchanges.

The second problem arising from the dominance of markets as the analytical unit, which results in the interchangeable use of the concepts of exchange and markets, is that these two concepts are intrinsically different. According to Loasby (1999: 107, cited in Araujo, 2007), and also recalling MacIntyre's distinction between an institution and a social practice, "to confuse markets with exchange is a category mistake; it is a confusion of institution and activities." Many scholars acknowledge that a market (as opposed to "a marketplace") is, as Miller (2002: 219, but see also Fourcade & Healy 2007) puts it, "an ideological model rather than an empirical core to economic activity." Conceptualizing exchange as a social practice has revealed this distinction between "markets" (as an institution) and "exchange" (as a practice) more clearly. Understanding these distinct principles of ordering is important, because to emerge, a market requires a broader institutional and political structure (Fligstein, 1996; 2002), whereas as my exploration of food collectives shows, new practices of exchange are not necessarily subject to formal institutional structures upon emergence and may even eschew formal structures, although they may become subject to them later on. Accounting for the distinct natures of markets and practices of exchange is thus important when studying emergent economic organization and its ordering effects.

7.2 Contributing to the understanding of how social practices emerge

The recent few inquiries into the emergence of practices (see e.g. Schatzki, 2013; Shove et al., 2012; Miettinen et al., 2012; Furnari, 2014) have primarily been theoretical, treating change, transformation, and emergence alike. Supported by the findings of this study, I argue that it is not enough to merely describe *how social practices emerge* (c.f. Bjørkeng et al., 2009; Gomez and Bouty, 2011; Gherardi and Perrotta, 2011), but one needs to be able to *define the "new" social practice* and describe what kind of social practice has emerged. By conceptualizing food collectives as a social practice for exchange, this study emphasizes accounting for the nature, contextuality and situatedness of the unfolding social practices in specific times and places. I extend my argument and contributions below by first addressing the emergence of a social practice as a web of practices, then by drawing attention to the ordering effects of social practices, and finally discuss the question of when we can say that a new social practice has emerged.

Several practice scholars suggest that a social practice comprises several interlinked practices forming a web, a texture, or a bundle of practices (Nicolini, 2012; Schatzki, 2001a; Gherardi, 2012). And yet, while organizational scholars generally speak of social practices (Lok and De Rond, 2013; Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007; Gherardi, 2012), they do not describe the interconnected web at the level of individual practices or trace how these practices come into being and become organized in a web to form a new type of a social practice with its own distinctive practical and normative rationality. But to understand how new

social practices emerge requires such attention. How can we, then, understand the relationship between individual practices and the emerging social practice of which they become to form a part?

Conceptualizing food collectives as a social practice for exchange made visible that individual practices only gain meaning as part of a wider context informed by a particular social practice or by what Graeber (2001, 2011) refers to as the wider “totality”. A single practice and the sayings and doings that comprise it (Schatzki, 2001b) makes sense only as part of a wider context that reveals the kind of competence, meanings, and materiality (Shove et al., 2012) and knowing regimes (Nicolini, 2011) *contained by individual practices as part of a particular social practice*. Buying and cooking food as part of participation in food collective exchange or conducting an interview as part of an ethnographic practice look and feel different than buying and cooking food as part of supermarket exchange or interviewing as part of recruiting for a job. But while Schatzki (2013) argues that new practices need to be *integrated* into a larger nexus of practices this study, in contrast, emphasizes that new social practices emerge by *transforming* the existing practices and *connecting them in new ways* so that they take on new meanings and enable new actions and new knowing to emerge within a particular (new) context that starts to form *a recognizable new social practice* with its own interactional orders. This brings me to the second part of the argument – how do the ordering effects of emergent social practices transpire?

The most powerful argument that practice theory makes is that the ordering effects of practices arising through recursive action emerge out of the properties of the practices rather than the properties of individuals (Schatzki, 2005; Reckwitz, 2002; Feldman and Worline, 2016; Gherardi, 2016). But the question remains, how do these collective ordering principles emerge despite that people have varying reasoning for and aspirations towards their practice (as the findings of this study show, see e.g. Chapter 1 and Essays 1-3)? The findings of this study speak against what Schatzki (2005: 481) argues that the orderings of practices is a matter of individuals acquiring “objective mental states that organize a practice”. Rather, this study finds that *order emerges when the qualities required by the social practice in order to persist become embodied in the doings and sayings of people*. These qualities, I argue, become the ordering principles of social practices but not by how they mentally order each and every individual participating in the social practice, but by how they require *a critical mass of people* to collectively enact and thereby to sustain the social practice. In this study, I identify rhythmic qualities (Essay 2) and evaluative qualities (Essay 3) that appeared essential in creating, participating in, and organizing food collectives. These findings suggest that an inquiry into the emergence of social practices should equally account for both the sociomaterial *activity under formation* and the *ways in which people participate in a social practice*.

Looking into how food collectives emerged as a practice of exchange further complements the knowing-in-practice approach by showing how learning takes place by acting tactically, that is, by doing while “inventing the way of doing” (Gherardi, 2016:690). This kind of coping cannot be understood solely as

tactically coping within the existing conditions created and defined by others as De Certeau (2004) suggests, but rather, *unplanned and improvised action is significant for creating new conditions* as in an emerging practice one does not yet know what one should learn or know. While the knowing-in-practice approach has increased our understanding of how, by becoming a new practitioner in the existing practice, people learn from other participants (Orr, 1998; 2006; Gherardi and Nicolini, 2002b), the findings of this study suggest that in an emerging practice *learning can equally be related to unlearning* some other practice in order to learn the new practice. Creating a new kind of economic order might not be possible without letting go of some of the existing practices of market exchange – in which people have, for instance, learned very specific types of rhythmic and evaluative orders (Bauman, 2011; Graeber, 2001; 2011; Mauss, 1954) – for enabling the learning of new types of orders and practices of exchange.

And finally, in addition to describing how social practices emerge, and what kind of a social practice has emerged, one needs to be able to say when has (such) a new social practice emerged in order to theorize on practice emergence. Whilst not seeking a particular moment in time, the empirical findings of this research point towards concluding that a new social practice has emerged when it has developed its own internal goods and standards of excellence that inform the web of practices comprising the social practice. Many scholars bring up the moral ordering of social practices, the exploration of which, recalling Kemmis (2009: 22, but see also Gherardi 2009b, MacIntyre 1984), by definition raises “moral questions about the responsibility of practitioners for their own actions and for the consequences of their actions for others.” And yet, this issue has so far not been given empirical consideration in the study of emerging practices (c.f. Bjørkeng et al., 2009; Gherardi and Perrotta, 2011; Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007; Gomez and Bouty, 2011). The concept of evaluative work developed in this study captures the intrinsic relationship between the means and ends of the practice; the process of emergence is intrinsically about the evolving and the establishment of this relationship into a more or less normalized way of “how we do things here”. But while previous research has emphasized cognitive effort in how practices become normalized (c.f. Geiger, 2009; Shove and Southerton, 2000; Bjørkeng et al., 2009; Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007; Weber et al., 2008), this study shows on the contrary that normalizing takes place through how *evaluative work becomes constitutive of the enactment of social practices*.

7.3 Advancing methodological inquiry into the emergence of social practices

As reviewed previously, very few empirical studies to date shed light on the emergence of social practices. While exploration of established social practices benefits from ethnographic approach, because studying practices is also about understanding the practice from within (Gherardi 2012, Nicolini 2009b), other data that can be used to analyze social practices are also available. However,

based on the findings of this study, I argue that ethnographic inquiry and longitudinal engagement in fieldwork are essential for production of an account of an emerging social practice. By *following practices real-time* one can observe how sociomaterial relationships form, how activity emerges, and articulations of meaning unfold in action. Following these is impossible without being “at the right place at the right time.” Being there enables exploration of actions in situ in contrast to tracing them retrospectively through discourse; although people can talk about their practices (Hitchings, 2012; Nicolini, 2009a), it matters *when* people talk about them because reconstructing past events is different from speaking about them as they occur.

In this study, by mobilizing a set of methods I demonstrate an ethnographic approach, which is by no means new, but only appears new in the context of studying emergence. This study has shown the importance of what Strauss (1987: 10) calls “experiential data” and emphasized that the research process itself may become a significant source of data and subject to analysis when studying emergent phenomena. The quality and the content of the data generated on “the object,” in this sense, cannot be detached from *the process of generating the data*, which *should in fact also be regarded as data*. By showing how the research process can be as informative in the analytical process as “purposefully” produced data, this study emphasizes that an ethnographic inquiry in itself should be recognized as an important source of analysis when studying emergent phenomena.

This study further contributes to future exploration of emergent phenomena by pointing towards *emergence as the focus of analysis* on the one hand and *as the context of analysis* on the other. Considering these two distinct ways of approaching emergence in qualitative research is important, because the former enables theorizing on the processes of practice emergence while the latter refers to a unique context that reveals the various ordering effects of practices and their emergence as well as the relationships between people, objects and their evolving practice.

7.4 Policy implications

Considering the environmental and social challenges arising from global food chains and industrial food production on the one hand and increase in political interest for promoting local food markets in Finland on the other hand, this study has much to offer regarding new and emerging forms of local food exchanges such as food collectives. Although several survey-based studies show increased interest in more local, pure, and fair food among consumers, at the same time there is evidence that desires for more sustainable consumption rarely materialize in practice (Connell et al., 2008; Follett, 2009). This is mostly because people are unable to access local and organic food conveniently in their everyday lives and are unwilling to pay premium prices for local and organic food when buying groceries at the supermarket.

This study, however, shows how people autonomously organize in order to find solutions to overcome these challenges. Where the mainstream retail

exchange stands out as a major convenience achievement and represents the efficiency of the modern markets, food collectives, like other similar types of alternative food initiatives (reviewed in Chapter 1), form around value propositions that explicitly contest the dominant food order and its underlying assumptions of what is convenient and what is good food and how it should be traded. Food collectives as a form of organizing access to food not only question the quality of food or the (un)sustainability of industrial agriculture, but also bring forth new values such as supporting local small-scale farmers and creating relationships among people living in the same neighborhoods. These issues raise important points for policymakers to consider.

First of all, food collectives among other alternative exchange practices increasingly emerging around energy, transportation and other consumer goods, seem not only to provide alternative ways to consume, but also emphasize the social and moral aspects of economic action. By creating a new practice of exchange, food collectives bring forth an alternative approach to valuing that accounts for qualitative aspects and shows that measuring value only in monetary terms can be problematic because putting a price-tag on relationships is not only extremely difficult, but likely to be destructive.

Second, by engaging in economic activities without formal organizations, a phenomenon oftentimes referred to as the sharing or community economy, food collectives not only contest the existing economic order but also the principles of the welfare state. As the welfare system is currently based on taxation and as many of these organizations eschew association with for-profit businesses, they also eschew becoming part of the taxation regime. This is indeed one of the most profound future challenges for policymakers: how to encourage active citizenship and community building that seem increasingly linked to economic activity without killing the heart of the activity with the bureaucracy of taxation? This dissertation encourages dialogue between researchers, policymakers, and citizens who actively engage in creating new practices for exchange and asks for more interdisciplinary research on “the new economies” (Raworth, 2017) and emergent forms of organizing economic action.

And third, this study raises important questions about the kinds of agencies individuals are thought to have as citizens, as consumers, or increasingly as “citizen-consumers” (Lockie, 2009; Mol, 2009). As consumers, individuals have the power of choice (or of boycotting) in the markets where people are assumed to have agency through their impact on supply through demand. As citizen, individuals have the choice of voting (or not voting) and can thereby effect changes in policy. However, this study finds that contrary to current assumptions, many people do not have a sense of agency in these spheres and feel disempowered regarding their own consumption choices, such as those related to food. Food collectives seem to bring about a new kind of *agency that is collective* and thus not bound to the spheres of markets or politics. If this is an emerging trend in the welfare state, policymakers need to account for this new type of collective agency, which questions the underlying economic order upon which the welfare states rests.

7.5 Limitations

Due to the methodological approach taken and the conceptual commitments made in this study, the limitations are related to how the social practice of food collectives has been presented in this study. First, this dissertation would have ideally been a monograph allowing for drawing on ethnographic principles not only as a set of methods and as a means for better understanding the practice from the inside (Gherardi, 2012; Nicolini, 2009b), but also as a means for representing (Van Maanen, 1988). From a practice perspective, researchers not only make conceptual choices for describing the practice of the researched, but are also affected by the research practice itself. I thereby acknowledge that the essays of this dissertation were partially guided and pragmatically affected by various calls for papers that allowed me to present my research and relate to ongoing academic discussions.

Consequently, and secondly, this has resulted in compromises in terms of emphasizing some aspects (e.g. moral, temporal) over others (e.g. discursive, political). Specifically, this study has emphasized material interaction and embodiment over language and meanings and not explicitly considered the relationship between articulation of meaning and the performance of activity nor the shaping of discourses in and by emergent social practices. But while language forms an essential part of practices (Geiger, 2009; Gherardi, 2012) and is representative of collectively held values (Graeber, 2001), to date it has perhaps been given too much explanatory power in studying human practice (for critique of the dominance of language over the body and materiality see e.g. Barad, 2003; Law and Mol, 2008).

And finally, it can be argued that any practice-based inquiry should at least consider the implications of theory development for practitioners (Eikeland and Nicolini, 2011; Feldman and Worline, 2016; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011). So, is there reason to consider whether this study is relevant to practitioners? Indeed, I have been balancing between generalizability and uniqueness in trying to account for the differences and peculiarities in food collectives while at the same time trying to find common denominators in their social practice. I understand that the analytical categories developed in this study might not appear directly mobilizable. However, I would like for *the ideas behind the developed concepts* to reflect “practice back to the practitioners,” as Eikeland and Nicolini (2011: 164) put it.

7.6 Avenues for future research

My suggestions for future research arise from the conclusions and contributions of this study on the one hand and from the limitations on the other hand. First of all, there has been one issue that the study has raised but has not directly attended to: the relationship between cognition and activity. Due to the nature of my data, at the heart of which I saw pragmatic challenges and daily coping, I focused primarily on analyzing and theorizing the activity and those markers by which people managed to get and to keep things going. However, this study also revealed that meanings, which were not always shared among the participants,

did have a visible role in the emergence of food collectives as a social practice for exchange. It is thus reasonable to ask how social practices emerge and persist despite that people attach different meanings towards their practice? And further, whether people know or whether they even think that they are participating in the same practice?

The framework of practical activity (Räsänen, 2015; Räsänen and Trux, 2012) introduced in this study and the concept of *orientations* developed within the framework might be one way forward in exploring the relationship between practices and people, but there may also be other useful conceptualizations for future research to consider that have not been brought up in this study.

Second, and closely related to the first point is the need to advance the inquiry into the relationship between articulation, performance and experiencing of meaning. Questions to ask here are, for instance, how do embodied meanings and affects (Gherardi, 2017) transpire when there is not yet language to speak about them? How do new meanings emerge in action and how do they get articulated? How does action shape discourse and vice versa? This avenue is also a methodological one as to examine the interwovenness of sayings and doings – and of what is left unsaid but is bodily experienced – might require developing new methods, such as recording and analyzing video and other visual material (Pink, 2008; 2013) or widening the perspective on what counts as data or analysis (Lather and St. Pierre, 2013; St. Pierre and Jackson, 2014).

And third, I strongly urge that future research on theorizing the emergence of social practices also engage in defining and conceptualizing social practices more inductively. As much of the current understanding of social practices and their emergence derives from the existing theoretical conceptualizations, grounding the definition of emergent social practices in empirical work is likely to bring new understanding and insight into how, why, when, and what kind of new social practices emerge.

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